

Punjab Opens Doors to Global Industry

Mann Promises Full Support to Investors

The Sikh Times Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, 14th March : Punjab is steadily moving towards a new era of industrial growth and economic revival as the state government intensifies its efforts to attract major industrial houses from across India and around the world.



economic prosperity and employment opportunities for the youth of Punjab. According to him, the arrival of large industrial houses will not only boost the state's economy but will also generate thousands of new jobs for young people,

smoothly. He said the state administration has been instructed to provide quick clearances, improved infrastructure, and efficient administrative support to ensure that investors feel confident about investing in Punjab.

are seriously considering establishing new industrial units in Punjab because of the positive signals coming from the state government. Industrial leaders believe that Punjab's strategic location, strong agricultural base, skilled workforce, and improved governance make it an attractive destination for investment.

Continued news page 2

Rs 95K cr earmarked for VB-G RAM G scheme from April 1: Sitharaman

But when they come again and stand here, they ask, 'What did you give for MGNREGA?' This government has reduced the funds for MGNREGA."

New Delhi. (Agency) As the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025—which replaces the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)—is yet to be formally notified and brought into force, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said that there will be a provision of Rs 95,000 crore for the new scheme from April 1.

RAMG framework. Responding to the debate on the second batch of supplementary demands for grants, the minister said Rs 95,000 crore had been allocated under the VB-G RAM G scheme for 2026-27.



brought the VB-G RAM G Bill, at that time Rs 95,000 crore was allocated. It is in the budget.

After the Finance Bill is passed, from 1st April there will be provision of Rs 95,000 crore under the same," she said. For those old pending bills, Rs 30,000 crore has been provided in this Supplementary Demand for Grants.

In UP, Rahul says RSS has no place for dalits, backwards in its ranks

Lucknow.(Agency) Launching a scathing attack on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the ruling BJP, Congress's Rebareli MP and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi claimed that there was no place for Dalits and the backwards in both the right-wing organisation.



Samvidhan Sammelan organised by the party in Lucknow, where he paid tribute to BSP founder president Kanshi Ram two days ahead of his birth anniversary.

Claiming that if Jawaharlal Nehru were alive today, Kanshi Ram would have been the CM, Gandhi said the late leader's struggle and vision were relevant in the contemporary political scenario.

Maharashtra government tables anti-conversion bill in Assembly

Mumbai .(Agency) The BJP-led Mahayuti government tabled the illegal conversion bill in the Maharashtra Assembly on Friday, with a provision of seven years imprisonment and Rs 5 lakh as a penalty.



objections, the police will have the right to take action against that person and others who are involved in illegal conversion. Samajwadi Party MLAs Abt Azami and Rais Shaikh oppose this proposed bill, saying this bill is to target minority communities.

I love India, Modi, will visit soon: Trump loyalist reads out US President's message

Known for her controversial remarks and hardline views on immigration, Laura Loomer, a Trump loyalist, said the US President loved PM Narendra Modi and said he would visit India soon as she read out her message at the India Today Conclave 2026.

New Delhi. (Agency) American far-right activist Laura Loomer on Saturday read out a special message from Donald Trump at the Conclave 2026, saying the US President "loves India" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

32-year-old activist said. Loomer's remarks came days after the Trump administration announced a 30-day waiver for India to purchase Russian oil cargoes already at sea, giving refiners limited flexibility to secure supplies during the crisis.



benchmark crude prices surged past USD 100 per barrel amid the ongoing Middle East war. The decision followed severe disruptions in global oil supply triggered by the war and Iran's closure of the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly 20-25 per cent of the world's daily oil consumption

normally passes. The narrow waterway connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea and has effectively been shut since the conflict began on February 28.

Front continued news

**Punjab Opens Doors to Global Industry  
Mann Promises Full Support to Investors**

Infrastructure improvements, including roads, logistics networks and industrial zones, are being prioritized. Political observers believe that these initiatives could mark the beginning of a significant economic transformation in Punjab. If the government succeeds in bringing large investments into the state, Punjab could soon emerge as one of the most dynamic industrial destinations in India.

For the people of Punjab, the promise of new industries brings hope for jobs, development, and economic stability. As the state moves forward on the path of industrialization, the coming years may well determine whether Punjab can reclaim its position as one of India's most prosperous and progressive regions.

News box

**Night temp hits 20°C for first time this season**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city experienced an unusually warm night on Friday, with the minimum temperature touching 20.7°C, the first time this season that the mercury crossed the 20-degree mark, according to data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The minimum temperature recorded at the NorthCap University automatic weather station was 20.7°C at 8.30am on March 13, around 2.6°C higher than the previous day. The reading was significantly above the seasonal average, reflecting a warming trend across Haryana. Several other parts of the state also recorded higher-than-usual night temperatures. Ambala reported a minimum of 19.8°C, Rohtak 18.8°C, Bhiwani 18.5°C, and Narnaul 19.4°C, all above their normal levels for mid-March. In contrast, Karnal recorded the lowest minimum temperature in the state at 15.6°C, though even this was above the normal range for the period.

Meteorologists said the rise in night temperatures was linked to prevailing atmospheric conditions and the absence of strong western disturbances, which otherwise help bring down temperatures during this time of the year. No rainfall was reported anywhere in the state in the past 24 hours, the IMD data showed.

Experts said the trend was likely to continue over the coming days, with both day and night temperatures expected to gradually rise across Haryana.

**Gurgaon stadium kitchen faces closure, players may have to leave**

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

An acute shortage of LPG has pushed the Nehru Stadium hostel canteen to the brink of closure, threatening to upend the daily routine of young volleyball trainees who depend on it for every meal. If the kitchen shuts, players staying at the hostel may have to leave the stadium and look for food elsewhere — a disruption that could break their training rhythm and force some to return home. The crisis has left 25 volleyball trainees in a limbo. For nearly a week, the kitchen kept running on its last few cylinders, but the canteen operator has now said the stock is exhausted and operations may stop from Saturday. "We were anyway down to the last few cylinders. If fresh supply does not arrive soon, the kitchen cannot continue. We need one cylinder every three days. Even buying one for Rs 2,000 is not sustainable. I have informed the sports department and will have to shut the kitchen from Saturday unless the situation improves," operator Rakesh Tomar said.

For the trainees, the problem is not just about meals, but about the stability that hostel life provides. Many said having to step out for food, or leave the



hostel altogether, would disturb a tightly structured practice schedule. "If the kitchen stops, we will have no food here. Many of us may have to leave the hostel, which will directly affect our volleyball practice," said Sachin (18) from Charkhi Dadri. Parmeet (17) said the hostel allows players to follow a disciplined routine. "We train for several hours every day. If we must arrange food outside or move elsewhere, our routine will be completely disrupted," he said. Narender (16) of Sirsa said the uncertainty is already affecting concentration. "We want to focus on the sport, not on finding food. If the kitchen shuts, many boys will be forced to leave. That will break our rhythm," he said. Parveen (17), from Jhajjar, said anxiety is growing among trainees. "The hostel is meant to support our training, but without LPG, everything comes to a halt," he added. District sports officer Aarti Kohli said the department is yet to receive a formal written intimation. "Once we receive it, we will have to ask the players to vacate," she added.

**'No clear plan for Bandhwari': NGT raps Gurgaon civic body for gaps in waste treatment**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed MCG to spell out a comprehensive action plan for handling and remediating waste at the Bandhwari landfill, after noting that no such plan exists even as the dumpsite continues to receive thousands of tonnes of garbage daily. Taking note of the submission of an applicant, a bench of the green body said on Wednesday, "MCG in its next report will also indicate the action plan." The tribunal — while hearing a batch of matters related to waste management and repeated fires at the landfill — allowed the request of the counsel for MCG, who sought four weeks' time to file the response to a report submitted by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), filed on March 9, on the implementation of interim measures at the site. The matter will now be heard on July 7. Besides a suo motu case, initiated following a news report on repeated fires at the site, petitioners include Poonam Yadav and



Vivek Kamboj. Spread over about 28.9 acres and rising nearly 38 metres, the landfill continues to receive around 2,200 metric tonnes of waste every day despite lacking a full-scale waste treatment facility. The bench, headed by NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava

and expert member Dr Afroz Ahmad, noted the CPCB's detailed report, which outlined the guidelines and directions issued by the board and the status of their implementation by MCG as of Feb 27. The report also included recommendations for managing the

landfill. During the hearing, counsel for the applicant pointed out that no comprehensive plan was prepared so far for managing and remediating the waste being dumped at Bandhwari. The Bandhwari landfill has long been under the NGT's scanner over issues of waste mismanagement, leachate leakage and widespread environmental damage.

In Nov last year, the tribunal pulled up Haryana govt for failing to comply with earlier directives, even as toxic leachate continued to spill into adjoining green areas. It directed the state principal secretary (environment) to explain the delay and imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on the state for seeking more time to file a compliance affidavit. Earlier inspections flagged that leachate from the site was overflowing through kutchra drains into plantation areas and forming stagnant pools, with concerns that it could spread to agricultural fields during heavy rain.

**Only 3 House meetings in 1 year: MCG faces govt heat**

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

MCG has convened only three House meetings in the past year, raising serious questions about compliance with statutory provisions governing municipal functioning.

Under Section 52 of the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, and Section 25 of the Haryana Municipal Act, 1973, municipal houses are required to hold at least one meeting every month to transact official business. Despite this clear mandate, MCG held only three meetings since the current House was elected on March 12, 2025.

Of these three meetings, one was a special session held in April last year to approve the budget for the current financial year, further highlighting the lack of regular deliberations on civic matters.

Other municipal corporations across Haryana face a similar situation.

Haryana govt has warned that any deviation from the prescribed provisions would be treated as "gross negligence and dereliction of duty," inviting strict administrative action against the concerned authorities.

"As per the said provisions, ordinarily at least one meeting in every month is to be held by the concerned municipalities for the transaction of its business. In addition to the aforesaid meetings, at least one meeting in every six months of a duration of not less than three days is also required to be held by each municipality," the department of urban local bodies said in a letter issued to civic bodies across the state.

The order also instructed corporation secretaries, and executive officers or secretaries, to prepare and circulate the list of business to be transacted in meetings under the direction of the mayor or president, in accordance with Haryana Municipal Corporation Business Bye-Laws, 2009, and Haryana Municipal Business Bye-Laws, 1981. Councillors repeating their term this time said that meetings used to happen regularly in the past. "Meetings should be held regularly since we have to raise the issues of our wards. In the last term of the House, meetings were held frequently, at least once every month-and-a-half. We seek action-taken reports, status of development works, and give feedback on our wards' work, besides raising critical issues. So, when the meetings are delayed, it creates hurdles in the development and maintenance works of each ward," said Kuldeep Yadav, councillor of Ward 11. Residents said the agency's lackadaisical approach undermines the purpose of municipal elections.

**Hotel staffers beat up guest to death in theft bid in Gurgaon**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Two staff members of a hotel near the railway station were arrested on Thursday for beating to death a 41-year-old man from Jharkhand, police said. The deceased, in the city seeking work, was staying at Basant Hotel. The accused were identified as Inderjeet (23), a cleaner, and Arvind (35), who occasionally worked as a cook at the hotel. According to police, the men targeted Anand Goswami after noticing he was a habitual drinker and carried cash. Inderjeet, a resident of Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, reportedly needed money for his sister's upcoming wedding. Police said Inderjeet initially intended to steal Goswami's money and phoe to access funds. "On the night of March 10-11, after the victim fell asleep following heavy drinking, Inderjeet



entered his room and took his mobile phone, planning to transfer money," an officer said. Goswami later woke up, discovered Inderjeet in the room, and demanded his phone back. When Inderjeet asked for the

phone's password, a heated altercation ensued. "During the dispute, Inderjeet assaulted the victim. Later that night, he called Arvind, the cook, and the two beat him further. Goswami sustained severe injuries and died in the room," the officer added. The two then left Goswami's body in the room and escaped. Police received information that a man was lying in a pool of blood in a room at Basant Hotel around 8.30am on Wednesday after a staff member spotted it while entering the room to clean it. A team from the Sector 5 police station reached the spot and took Goswami's body in custody. During the investigation, police went through CCTV footage from the hotel which showed both the accused escaping.

**No bail for friends of man who fell to his death from 19th floor**

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A sessions court in Greater Noida on Thursday rejected bail pleas filed by two men accused in the death of a 26-year-old who fell from the 19th floor of a residential tower following a late-night quarrel with friends. The order was passed by additional sessions judge Vikas Nagar in connection with the death of Manish Kumar, who died after falling from a flat in Paramount Society on the intervening night of Jan 14 and 15. Kumar's body was found the following morning on the balcony of the second floor.

Police initially suspected suicide, however, after complaints from Kumar's family and witness statements, investigators registered a murder case under BNS sections 103(1) (murder) and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) at Surajpur police station. Two of Kumar's friends, Kapil Kumar and Rishabh Rathi, who were arrested on Jan 18, had moved the court seeking bail. After hearing arguments, the court rejected both applications. In its

order, the court said the accused had failed to demonstrate that they were innocent or falsely implicated. Without commenting on the merits of the case, the judge observed that the allegations related to a serious offence and that the accused were among the last people seen with the victim before his death. "The accused failed to satisfy the court that they are innocent and falsely implicated in the case," the court noted, adding that the circumstances did not justify granting bail at this stage.

According to investigators, Kumar had been staying in a flat on the 19th floor with several friends, including Rishabh Bhati, Rishabh Rathi, Prince Bhati, Badal, and Kapil Kumar. According to the prosecution, a dispute broke out late that night after Kumar allegedly behaved inappropriately with Badal.

The incident reportedly led to an argument involving several people in the apartment, which soon escalated into a physical fight. During the altercation, Kumar apparently toppled over the balcony. Police said the

accused were present in the flat when Kumar fell. They also cited statements from the society's watchman, who told police that Kumar had been seen entering the building with the accused shortly before the incident. CCTV footage of them arriving at the apartment is also part of the evidence.

In its order, the court questioned the circumstances surrounding the fall. It noted that the accused had failed to explain how Kumar ended up falling from the balcony and why no one attempted to alert neighbours or take him to hospital, if the fall had been accidental.

The court also referred to Badal's statements, recorded during the investigation, which suggested that some of the accused had admitted to throwing Kumar from the balcony during the fight. "Co-accused Badal admitted that at around 3.15am, she, along with Kapil and Rishabh, threw Manish from the balcony with the intention of causing his death," the court noted.

**LPG Cylinder Shortage: For food vendors in Gurgaon, it feels like Covid all over again**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

lockdown, he was forced to return to Uttarakhand as his livelihood got wiped out in a day. Aswal, too, has one more day's fuel left in stock. "I serve breakfast, lunch and dinner to around 100 customers and I have already informed whoever came today that I will have to shut shop and go back to Uttarakhand," he said. Bablu, who is from Bihar and sells noodles and other Chinese food from a stall in Dundahera, is also perilously close to exhausting his last cylinder and doesn't know when he will get the next. He doesn't have the luxury of taking a day or two off — there are three children in the house whose school fee he must pay on time. He has lived in the city for 28 years. Besides, there's the Rs 35,000 in monthly rent for his stall — a cost he may soon be forced to give up. "My stall has been shut for the past five days. I am only able to sell tea and Maggi using an induction. If the

situation remains the same for the next 10 days, I will have to leave the shop. The supplier refused to provide me with gas cylinders," Bablu said. The crunch is acute for vendors who barely make ends meet, especially when the cost of cooking gas is compared against their daily earnings. "The day before yesterday, I paid Rs 150 per kg for gas. Today it was Rs 400. I don't earn that kind of money. I will have to shut my shop from this evening," said Amit, 29, who runs a momos stall in Chakkarpur market. Most suppliers have either abandoned vendors or claimed they are helpless. Vakeel Alam, who manages New Zaika Muradabadi, shared similar concerns as Sunil Aswal. Originally from Uttar Pradesh, Alam also said operations may shut down within days as his LPG stock is nearly exhausted. "The supplier expressed his helplessness. We

will be forced to close the eatery soon and I will return to my hometown in UP to stay with my family," Alam said. Anticipating that the situation could worsen, several already sent their family members back to their hometowns to ride out the crisis. Some vendors said they are unable to procure gas despite being able to shell out what they can. "Earlier, I used to get a cylinder for Rs 1,100 from my supplier. Now I am not getting gas even after offering Rs 3,000. I will work here till I have gas. After that, I will move back to my village in Bihar," said Birender Yadav, who has a litti chokha stall outside Guru Dronacharya Metro station. Residents relying on small cylinders are feeling the pinch as well. Aniket, who lives in Sheela Colony and works at a private firm, said he switched to an induction cooktop after the price of

refilling a 5kg cylinder rose.

**THE SIKH TIMES**  
 Edited, Printed, Published  
 Owned by Simmi Babbar  
 N - 31, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar  
 Delhi-110009  
 Printed at Quami Patrika Printing  
 Press, A-4/A-144, Tronica City  
 (Loni), Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh)  
 Corporate Office:  
 5, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,  
 Press Area, ITO, New Delhi  
 Editor-in-Chief  
 Gurcharan Singh Babbar  
 Mob : 9654077232, 9971359517  
 Website : www.thesikhimes.in  
 Email : sikhimesindia@gmail.com  
 RNI No. DELENG/2008/25465

# We expected Amit Shah to speak about MSP, loan waiver or special package for Punjab, but he left after merely abusing Punjabis: CM Mann

**The Sikh Times**  
SAS NAGAR, 14 March: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Saturday strongly criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah for failing to address Punjab's key concerns during his visit to the state, stating that people had expected announcements on MSP, farm loan waiver and a special package but were left disappointed. The Chief Minister said the BJP-led Centre has consistently discriminated against Punjab by withholding its rightful funds, ignoring farmers' demands and failing to act on major drug seizures outside the state, while attempting to defame Punjab. The Chief Minister asserted that despite such challenges, the Punjab Government is taking decisive steps to curb drugs, strengthen the economy and attract investment, adding that

the Progressive Punjab Investors Summit has received overwhelming support from industry leaders exploring new opportunities in the state. Interacting with the media on Saturday on the sidelines of the Progressive Punjab Investors Summit, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann stated that farmers and citizens of Punjab had hoped for concrete decisions addressing their concerns. "We expected Amit Shah to speak about MSP, loan waiver or special package for Punjab, but he left after merely abusing Punjabis," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He added that people of Punjab were expecting big announcements such as a legal guarantee of MSP for crops, waiver of farm loans and other measures for farmers. The Chief Minister also criticised the Centre for withholding Punjab's rightful funds. "The Modi Government

has withheld Punjab's RDF and GST funds, and has still not released 21,600 crore flood relief compensation," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He said that despite all claims made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding 21,600 crore in flood relief, Punjab had not received even 216 from that announcement. He added that during the devastating floods, leaders from the Centre only visited Punjab but he termed "disaster tourism." Raising the issue of gangsterism, the Chief Minister said that the Union Government has failed to address the problem at a national level. "Punjab gangster Lawrence Bishnoi has been given shelter by BJP Govt in Gujarat jail, and he isn't even being allowed to be brought to Punjab," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He described gangsterism as a national issue posing a serious

threat to the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the country and criticised the Union Government for failing to curb it. Speaking on the issue of drugs, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said that preventing smuggling across the international border is primarily the responsibility of the Centre. "Stopping drug smuggling from across the border is the Centre's responsibility, yet our government is installing anti-drone systems with its own funds to curb drugs," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He added that the Punjab Government has installed anti-drone technology along a 550 km long border to stop cross-border smuggling despite receiving no support from the central government. He further questioned the lack of action against large seizures of narcotics outside Punjab. "In Gujarat, lakhs of tonnes of drugs

are being seized but no action is taken, while Punjab has launched the country's biggest campaign against drugs," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He pointed out that the entire nation knows that around 3,000 kg of drugs were seized at Mundra Port in Gujarat but no meaningful action has been taken against those responsible. CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said that divisive politics will never succeed in Punjab. "Punjab's soil is fertile, but the seeds of the BJP's politics of religion and hatred will never grow here," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. Taking a dig at the BJP's political ambitions in the state, the Chief Minister remarked, "In Punjab, BJP is a 'scooter party' that dreams of capturing power in 2027 with the help of Congress," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He also said that Amit Shah's

visit to Punjab had failed to address the real issues faced by people. "Amit Shah came to Punjab only to speak ill of us and left without doing anything," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. Questioning the BJP's claims regarding the upcoming Assembly elections, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said the party lacks the organisational strength to contest alone. "From where will the BJP bring 117 candidates to contest alone in Punjab?" stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He added that since the BJP does not have enough leaders in the state, it will likely try to induct leaders from other parties to contest elections. Raising the issue of drugs again, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann asked, "3,000 kg of drugs were seized at a Gujarat port, why is there no action there?" He said the BJP government has failed to take strict action against

drug smugglers despite such large seizures. The Chief Minister added that the people of Punjab are well aware of the BJP's political conduct. "Punjab knows the BJP very well; there is no place for politics of hatred in Punjab," stated CM Bhagwant Singh Mann. He recalled how farmers from Punjab were humiliated during the agitation against the farm laws and how more than 700 farmers attained martyrdom during that struggle. CM Bhagwant Singh Mann also highlighted the achievements of the Punjab Government, stating that it has already provided more than 65,000 government jobs to the youth of the state, while the BJP's promise of providing two crore jobs remains unfulfilled. He also remarked that the promised 215 lakh has never been deposited in the bank accounts of common citizens. Criticising

the Centre further, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the Union Government has withheld Punjab's legitimate share in RDF, GST, NHM and other funds, which is affecting the development of the state. He described this as a deliberate attempt to derail Punjab's progress, peace and prosperity. He also said that the Punjab Government has repeatedly recommended the implementation of the Swaminathan Commission report for the benefit of farmers, but the Centre has not acted on it. CM Bhagwant Singh Mann further cautioned that the proposed India-US agreement could adversely affect farmers. The Chief Minister added that Punjab borrows funds from the same sources as BJP-ruled states do, and that this productive debt is utilised for providing services and facilities to the people.

## Police arrest teenage realtor for gunning down gardener over closed gate in south Delhi

New Delhi: Santal, who also worked as a caretaker of the property, was shot in the chest. Police have arrested 19-year-old Piyush Yadav, a local real estate agent, for gunning down the older man. They said the incident took place around 2 am near the Shamsan Ghat in Dera village. "A police team rushed to the spot after receiving information that women were crying loudly in the neighbourhood. Upon reaching, it was found that a man had been shot and was lying motionless near the cremation ground," an officer said. An empty cartridge was recovered from the spot, he said. "During the investigation, it was revealed that the accused had a verbal altercation with the victim over the closing of a gate of the property. The altercation escalated, and in a fit of rage, Piyush allegedly shot Santal and fled the spot," the officer said. When questioned, Piyush confessed to the crime and led the police to the gun he had hidden in his house. Police said Santal took care of several properties in the vicinity, while Piyush Yadav ran his real estate business from Chhatarpur Phase 2. Santal's body was taken to Safdarjung Hospital for a post-mortem.

## Delhi University rolls out 'zero tolerance' policy for campus defacement

New Delhi: With the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections for fast approaching, the university administration has announced a stringent "zero tolerance" policy against defacement, under the banner of its "Green Election, Clean Election" initiative. The announcement was made following a meeting on Tuesday, attended by the Chief Election Officer, members of the Proctorial Board, Maurice Nagar SHO, DUSU office bearers and student representatives. An official statement from the DU Election Committee said, "The committee also apprised the representative that there would be zero tolerance for defacement during the current DUSU elections." All candidates have been directed to use only handmade posters and to strictly adhere to specified campaign expenditure limits. The university's crackdown follows complaints from past years, when graffiti, unauthorised banners and posters covered walls, flyovers, and metro pillars across both North and South campuses. This year, authorities say, enforcement would be much more vigilant.

## Panipat man charred to death, another injured as car catches fire after accident in Delhi

New Delhi: A 40-year-old man was charred to death while another was injured after their car caught fire following an accident in outer north Delhi's Hulambi Khurd area in the early hours of Sunday, an official said. The incident occurred around 2 am near Jhanda Chowk on Urban Extension Road II, under the jurisdiction of Narela Industrial Area police station, the official added. According to the police, a PCR call was received and a team rushed to the spot where they found a white Ertiga in a burnt condition. The driver was found dead, while another was rescued from the adjacent seat. He was injured. The driver was identified as Vipender and the injured as Jagbir, both residents of Haryana's Panipat, police added. Jagbir was immediately shifted to the SRHC Hospital in Narela, while the dead body was moved to the BJRM Hospital, a police officer said. Initial investigation suggests that the Haryana-registered SUV might have lost control and crashed before catching fire, though the exact cause is still under investigation, the officer said. A case has been registered, and further investigation is under way to ascertain the cause of the fire and the circumstances surrounding the accident, the officer added.

## 3 held for performing car stunts on road

New Delhi: The police have arrested three individuals for performing dangerous car stunts on a public road, after a video of the incident went viral on social media. Three vehicles used during the stunts have also been seized. According to the police, the video, which circulated widely online, captured the suspects engaging in risky behaviour near the Shobha City traffic signal in Sector 108, under the jurisdiction of Rajendra Park police station. In the footage, three young men were seen standing atop a moving car. Behind them, several others were spotted in 8 to 10 vehicles, with sunroofs open and some individuals emerging from windows while filming the stunt and performing hazardous manoeuvres. The arrested accused has been identified as Himanshu (22), a resident of Khaika village near Sohna, Sagar (24) and Kaushal (24), residents of Peeragarhi in Delhi. "The accused not only endangered their own lives but also put the safety of others at risk by performing these stunts on public roads," said a police spokesperson. "We have recovered three vehicles used in the act — two Mahindra Thars and one Toyota Fortuner. A further investigation is underway, and more arrests are expected soon."

# 22-week-old premature baby miraculously, discharged home safely

New Delhi: A baby girl weighing 525 gm at birth at a private hospital in the national capital has now been discharged in good health with a weight of 2.010 kg — said to be a rare survival feat, not just for the Delhi NCR region but for the entire country. Dr Jay Kishore, Senior Neonatologist at Cloudbine Hospital, Patparganj, led his team to script medical history — successfully discharged the baby born at a gestational age of just 22 weeks and 5 days, after a remarkable 105-day NICU journey. Dr Kishore said, "This survival is a testament to medical precision, team dedication, and the parents' unshakeable faith. Extreme prematurity is a major challenge, but when science and compassion work together, miracles happen." The parents, who had long battled infertility and suf-

fered a miscarriage after their first IVF attempt,



conceived again through IVF. However, their joy turned into anxiety when premature labour began at just 22 weeks and 5 days — a perilous stage where survival rates are exceedingly low. Against all odds, the baby was delivered, intubated

immediately, and resuscitated in the delivery

room. Despite being counselled about the poor prognosis, the parents placed their trust in Dr Kishore's expertise and opted for full intensive care support. The baby was ventilated, given early surfactant therapy, and placed on Parenteral Nutrition. By day 3, mother's own milk (MOM) was introduced, and by day 10, the baby was successfully weaned off invasive ventilation. After prolonged non-invasive support using synchronised NIPPV and CPAP on an indigenous Optimedics ventilator, the baby was shifted to room air. Amazingly, during the entire NICU stay, not a single drop of formula milk was used. The care approach included developmentally supportive care, kangaroo mother care, and exclusive use of mother's milk, which played a critical role in the baby's growth and neurological

team provided round-the-clock, meticulous care —

development. Cranial ultrasounds before discharge were normal, and LASER treatment for Zone 2 Plus ROP was successfully completed. Dr Kishore said, "A perfect triad of medical excellence, nursing dedication, and parental trust. At 22 weeks, survival is not just about machines or medicines — it's about a system that refuses to give up. Our nurses, associate consultants, and the parents stood by every single day. This is a victory for all of them."

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, DEEPAK KUMAR VERMA S/O PARTAP SINGH resident of H.No.16, Tara Nagar Main Kakrola Road, Kakrola, South West Delhi, Delhi-110078 have changed the name of my minor daughter SHREYA ALIAS SHREYA VERMA aged 13 years, and she shall hereafter be known as SHREYA VERMA.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SIDDHARTH RANA S/O BHAGWAN RANA residing at H No-1074, SIRASPUR, DELHI-110042 have changed my name to SIDDHARTH RANA for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Kapil Kumar Yadav S/o Dinesh Yadav R/o House No-523 P, Sector-14, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001, Have Changed My Name To Kapil Yadav For All Purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Pradeep Kumar S/o Prem Chand R/O D-754/A, Gali No.1, Ashok Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110093 have changed the name of my minor son from Arjun to Arjun Vaidwan.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Anupama D/o Pradeep Kumar R/O D-754/A, Gali No.1, Ashok Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110093 have changed my name to Anupama Chaudhary.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, VINOD KUMAR S/O UDAY SINGH residing at FLAT NO-G-3/8, NEAR DDA WATER TANK, SECTOR-4, ROHINI, DELHI-110085 have changed my name to VINOD KUMAR KUSHWAHA for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Manoj Ram S/o Ram Bilash Ram R/O Flat No-6, Tower-8, Harmela Street, IRIS, Vatika City, Sector-49, Gurgaon, Haryana-122018, Have Changed My Name To Manoj Kumar For All Purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Taran Preet Singh Kochhar S/o Manpreet Singh Kochhar R/O 10C/80 SFS Flats Green View Apartment Mayapuri Road Hari Nagar West Delhi-110064 Have Change My Given Name Taranpreet Singh and Surname Kochhar for all purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Chandan Veer S/o Ram Ji Lal R/O Q-157 Vikas Vihar Uttam Nagar West Delhi-110059 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as CHANDER PAL in my minor daughter namely KIRTI aged 15 years in her birth certificate No.MCDOLIR-0110-004425168. The actual name of mine is CHANDER VEER which may be amended accordingly

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, DEEPAK KUMAR VERMA S/O PARTAP SINGH resident of H.No.16, Tara Nagar Main Kakrola Road, Kakrola, South West Delhi, Delhi-110078 have changed the name of my minor daughter SHREYA ALIAS SHREYA VERMA aged 13 years, and she shall hereafter be known as SHREYA VERMA.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SUSHMA D/O Vinod Kumar R/O B-6 Police Colony Mandir Marg New Delhi 110001 Have changed my name to Sushma Badola for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Sushma D/O Vinod Kumar R/O B-6 Police Colony Mandir Marg New Delhi 110001 Have changed my name to Sushma Badola for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Swaran Kaur Sawhney W/o Prith Pal Singh R/O 10C/80 SFS Flats Green View Apartment Mayapuri Road Hari Nagar West Delhi-110064 Have Changed My Name to Swaran Kaur for all purpose.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, Rahul Vishwakarma S/O H.P. Vishwakarma R/O J-4, Ground Floor Gandhi Market, Mir Dard Road, Niroto Road, Indraprastha, Central Delhi, Delhi-110002 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Rahul Kumar Vishwakarma in my minor daughter namely Anika Vishwakarma aged 5 years in his School Records. The actual name of mine is Rahul Vishwakarma.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, INDU CHAUHAN W/O NARENDER SINGH CHAUHAN R/O N-129/1, T-HUTS, KHILONA BAGH DIST NORTH WEST DELHI-110009 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as INDU KANWAR in my minor son namely HARSH VARDHAN SINGH CHAUHAN aged 13 years in his school record and birth certificate No. MCDOLIR-2211-005020356. The actual name of mine is INDU CHAUHAN which may be amended accordingly

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, CHANDER VEER S/O RAM JI LAL R/O Q-157 Vikas Vihar Uttam Nagar West Delhi-110059 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as CHANDER PAL in my minor daughter namely KIRTI aged 15 years in her birth certificate No.MCDOLIR-0110-004425168. The actual name of mine is CHANDER VEER which may be amended accordingly

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-3204848W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VILL-BISHUNDAS, PORMURSAM, DISTT-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 have changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-3204848W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VILL-BISHUNDAS, PORMURSAM, DISTT-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 have changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, BALJEET SINGH S/O GURCHARAN SINGH R/O 12/32, Geeta Colony, East Delhi-110031 declare that name of mine, my wife and my minor daughter has been wrongly written as BALJEET SINGH CHUGH, GURPREET KAUR CHUGH in my minor daughter JASLEEN KAUR aged 16 years in her 10th class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine, my wife and my minor daughter are BALJEET SINGH, GURPREET KAUR and JASLEEN KAUR respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, MOGHAL FATHIMA BAIG Wife of JC-35017L Rank-NB/SUB Name-MOGHAL MOHAMMAD BAIG Presently residing at 9-5-5, ANDHRA PRADESH, PERALA, CHIRALA PRAKASAM DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH-523157, have changed my name from MOGHAL FATHIMA BAIG to FATHIMA SHAIK for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 16/07/2025 before First Class Magistrate, Shillong, Meghalaya.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, JUGAL KISHOR S/O Lala Dhar R/O H.No-196 S/F, Kh.No-619/21, Chatter Pur, South Delhi, Delhi-110074 have changed the name of my minor daughter namely Krishna Devi aged 16 years and she shall hereafter be known as Priya.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Farman S/o Akeel Ahmed R/O B 272/27, Gali No 4, Subhash Mohalla North Ghonda, Garhi Mendu, Bhajan Pura, North East, Delhi-110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Farman Ahmed.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Atif S/o Manzoor Khan R/O 1/99-C, 4F/F, Gali No-5, Guru Harkrishan School Wali, Gali, Kabiir Nagar, Gokal Pur, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Atif Khan.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Akash S/o Makan Singh Rawat R/O 2087/5, Gali No.20, Prem Nagar Patel Nagar, Patel Nagar S.O, Central Delhi, Delhi-110008 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Akash Rawat.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Sarang Kumar W/o Samarjeet Gupta R/O E-400-D, Block-E, Ashok Nagar, Vasundhara Enclave, East Delhi, Delhi, Delhi-110096 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Sarang Sav.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as Laxman Yadav alias Bhavikshan Yadav S/O Bechan Yadav R/O Gram Debra, Post Bela, Thana Babuberhi, Ward No-02, Bela, PO Bela, Dist Madhubani, Bihar-847224 Have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bhavikshna Yadav.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-3204848W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VILL-BISHUNDAS, PORMURSAM, DISTT-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 have changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Sansare Amrut Narayan father of No.4580889H Rank-Hav Name Sansare Ravindra Amrut residing at Vill. Deolali Pravara, Tehsil - Rahuri, District.Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra - 413716 have changed my name from Sansare Amrut Narayan to Amrut Narayan Sansare vide affidavit dated 15/07/2025 executed before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NO-17007475L Rank-NK Name-JITENDRA GANGWAR S/O LATE NIRANJAN LAL GANGWAR R/O WARD NO-11, MOHALLA GYASPUR, NEAR BANGALI BABA MANDIR, BILASPUR, PILIBHIT, UTTAR PRADESH-262201 have changed my minor son's name from DAKSH GANGWAR to YASH GANGWAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 05/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NO-17007475L Rank-NK Name-JITENDRA GANGWAR S/O LATE NIRANJAN LAL GANGWAR R/O WARD NO-11, MOHALLA GYASPUR, NEAR BANGALI BABA MANDIR, BILASPUR, PILIBHIT, UTTAR PRADESH-262201 have changed my minor son's name from DAKSH GANGWAR to YASH GANGWAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 05/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, ANITA BANSAL W/O PAWAN BANSAL residing at B-504, MAYURDHWAJ APARTMENT, I.P EXTN, EAST DELHI-110092 have Change my name to ANITA RANI BANSAL for all future purpose.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I, Jyoti pal W/O Sunil Kumar R/O WZ-125, Village Begumpur, North West Delhi - 110086, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Jyoti in my minor Daughter Yashika aged 14 years in her school cords and birth certificate No.MCDOLR09368299. The actual name is Jyoti Pal.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, PUNNAM DEVI Wife of No-14913053K Rank-HAV Name-NARENDER SINGH R/O C-7, LAXMI GARDEN, NAJAFGARH, NEW DELHI-110043 have changed my name from PUNNAM DEVI to POONAM DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Executive Magistrate, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-3204848W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VILL-BISHUNDAS, PORMURSAM, DISTT-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 have changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-3204848W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VILL-BISHUNDAS, PORMURSAM, DISTT-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 have changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEETAS DEVI Wife of No-3204848W Rank-HAV Name-DHARMENDRA SINGH R/O VILL-BISHUNDAS, PORMURSAM, DISTT-HATHRAS, U.P. 204213 have changed my name from NEETAS DEVI to NITESH DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 30/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as ASHISH KUMAR RATHOR S/O PURAN LAL R/O C-48, RAJEEV NAGAR BEGUM PUR, NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110086, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAZA AHMED.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY S/O LATE SH. LAXMAN CHAUDHARY Permanent R/o Parsauri Khrohdar, Sitamari, Bihar-843325 and Presently Residing at Plot No. B-20, Second Floor, Dass Garden, Baprola Vihar, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110043, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SANJAY CHOUDHARY in my minor daughter namely SHIWANGI CHOUDHARY aged 17 years in her 10th class Marksheet. The actual name of mine is SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, VINOD KUMAR S/O UDAY SINGH residing at FLAT NO-G-3/8, NEAR DDA WATER TANK, SECTOR-4, ROHINI, DELHI-110085 have changed my name to VINOD KUMAR KUSHWAHA for all future purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SANTOSH KUMAR S/O VISHVA NATH PRASAD residing at PLOT NO-58859, FLAT NO-2, STREET NO-5, HAVENS GARDEN MATIALA, DELHI-110059 have changed my name to SANTOSH KUMAR GUPTA for all future purposes

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Anil Balakrishna Panicker s/o Angakattil Narayan Balakrishna Panicker R/O A-6/334-A, Janta Flats, Paschim Vihar, Delhi-110063, have changed my name to Anil Bala Panicker permanently.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for general information that I, NIDHI AGGARWAL YADAV D/o VIRENDER KUMAR AGGARWAL, AL and Ex. Wife of AMIT YADAV, R/O H.No E-12, Hauj Khas, South West Delhi-110016, declare that I got divorce from my Ex. Husband AMIT YADAV vide Court Decree HMA No. 603/2019 dated 30 - 04-2019, further I have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NIDHI AGGARWAL. I also have changed the name of my minor son namely AAYAN YADAV, aged 16 years and my minor daughter namely ARSHIYA YADAV, aged 13 years and they shall hereafter be known as AAYAN AGGARWAL and ARSHIYA AGGARWAL respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Swaran Kaur Sawhney W/o Prith Pal Singh R/O 10C/80 SFS Flats Green View Apartment Mayapuri Road Hari Nagar West Delhi-110064 Have Changed My Name to Swaran Kaur for all purpose.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, TAJINDER KAUR W/O Jaspreet Singh Bawjeja R/O 5243 Ramjas Road Karol Bagh Delhi -110005 Have Changed My Name To Tajinder Kaur Bawjeja For All Purpose.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**CORRIGENDUM**  
Ref: Tender Notice No. 76/2025-2026 dated 03.01.2026  
(i) Tender No. 15255237 due on 07.04.2026 (S. No. 04)  
In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 13.03.2026 to 07.04.2026. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.  
The corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in.  
**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE** 855/26

NEWS BOX

### Dubai Hit Again In Less Than 24 Hours, US Embassy In Baghdad Targeted

Dubai. (Agency)

A building in Dubai's financial hub has been hit by debris from an intercepted attack. This is the second such attack in less than 24 hours as the US-Israeli-Iran war enters day 15. No fire occurred, and no injuries were reported. Authorities confirmed that the incident caused by debris from a successful interception, which struck the facade of a building in central Dubai, has been fully contained. Dubai Media Office informed via post on social media platform X (formerly Twitter). On Friday, the facade of a building in central Dubai was hit by debris from an interception. An AFP correspondent saw the damaged building in Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) after hearing the bangs.

"I jumped out of bed -- that was the loudest sound I've ever heard," one of the witnesses living close by told AFP, requesting anonymity. "It was so loud, I was so sure when I looked out the window that it was going to be something catastrophic... The ground shook," they added. Another AFP correspondent described hearing a huge double blast that rattled buildings and left a large cloud of black smoke hanging over the central district. On the sidelines, a drone struck the US embassy in Baghdad, an Iraqi security official said, as an AFP journalist saw smoke rising from the complex. "A drone hit the embassy," the official said, with a second security source confirming that an attack had targeted the diplomatic mission. The report of the attack came after two strikes targeted the powerful Iran-backed group Kataeb Hezbollah, killing two members, including a "key figure", security sources said. At 02:15 am (2315 GMT Friday), a missile struck a house that was being used by Kataeb Hezbollah, said a security source, adding that "a key figure was martyred," and two members of the group were wounded.

### Woman, 3 Sons Arrested Over "Terror Bombing" Near US Embassy In Norway

World. (Agency)

Three brothers and their mother have been remanded in police custody for up to four weeks on suspicion of taking part in the bombing of the US embassy in Oslo last week, a Norwegian court said in a ruling on Friday. The U.S. embassy was hit by an explosion on Sunday and police later said they had apprehended the suspects, accusing them of a "terror bombing" intended to kill or cause significant damage.

The powerful early-morning blast from an improvised explosive device (IED) damaged the entrance to the embassy's consular section but caused no injuries, Norwegian authorities have said.

One of the men has admitted to placing a device, while the three other suspects have denied involvement, their lawyers have said.

### France returns African talking drum: The sacred instrument that once 'spoke' to entire villages and warned of danger

World. (Agency)

A sacred drum that once served as a powerful communication tool for communities in Ivory Coast has returned home more than a century after it was seized during French colonial rule. Known as the Djidji Ayokwe, the massive wooden instrument was taken by French authorities in 1916 and later transported to France, where it remained in museum collections for decades. Its recent return marks a significant moment for cultural restitution and historical justice. For the Ebrie people, the drum is far more than an artefact. It represents a living symbol of identity, tradition and authority, once capable of sending messages across entire communities through sound alone.

The return of the sacred talking drum. The Djidji Ayokwe was officially returned to Ivory Coast after the French parliament approved a special law allowing the artefact to be removed from France's national collections. The sacred drum had been displayed in Paris for decades, first at the former Trocadero Museum and later at the Musee du Quai Branly. It arrived in Abidjan aboard a specially chartered plane and was welcomed by traditional dancers, local chiefs and cultural officials at Félix Houphouet-Boigny International Airport. The drum was kept inside a large wooden crate marked "fragile" as part of careful efforts to protect the historic object during transport. Ivory Coast's Culture Minister Françoise Remarck described the moment as deeply emotional and historically important. "This is a historic day with a lot of emotions," she said. "We are living through a moment of justice and remembrance that finally marks the return of the Djidji Ayokwe to its land of origin."

What is the Djidji Ayokwe talking drum? The Djidji Ayokwe, sometimes translated as "Panther Lion," is an enormous wooden talking drum that measures more than three metres in length and weighs around 430 kilograms. It is carved from iroko wood, a durable hardwood widely used in West African craftsmanship. Unlike smaller talking drums used by musicians, this instrument was designed for long-distance communication. Its powerful sound could travel across large areas of land, allowing messages to reach multiple villages.

The drum belonged to the Ebrie people, an ethnic group historically based around the region that is now Abidjan, Ivory Coast's largest city. Within Ebrie society the drum was regarded as sacred and was closely tied to leadership and community authority. Why it is called a talking drum. The name "talking drum" comes from the way the instrument could imitate the rhythm and tone patterns of human speech.

# Ready For Long Battle As Israel Threatens Lebanese Infrastructure: Hezbollah

## Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war last week when the Tehran-backed militant group attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes.

World. (Agency)

Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem said on Friday his group was ready for a long confrontation with Israel, as the latter threatened to make Lebanon pay an "increasing price" in damage to infrastructure. Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war last week when the

Tehran-backed militant group attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes. "We have prepared ourselves for a long confrontation, and God willing, they (Israelis) will be surprised on the battlefield," Qassem said in his second televised address since the latest war began. "This is an existential battle, not a limited or simple battle." Israel on Friday destroyed a bridge over the Litani River between the towns of Zrariyeh and Tayr Falsay, according to Lebanon's state-run National News Agency. The river bisects southern Lebanon, from east to west. In a statement, the Israeli military described the bridge as a "key crossing" for Hezbollah "from northern to southern Lebanon, to build up its power and prepare for combat". The attack was the first on Lebanese public infrastructure to be acknowledged by Israel since the start of the Middle East war. "This is just the beginning and the Lebanese government and the state of Lebanon will pay an

increasing price in damage to Lebanese national infrastructure used by Hezbollah terrorists," Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Friday. He said Lebanon



would suffer "loss of territory -- until it fulfils its central commitment of disarming Hezbollah". Earlier this week, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun offered to negotiate directly with Israel, but on Friday he said he had not received a response. The Israeli military bombed several roads in southern Lebanon on Friday, according to the official National News Agency, blocking

access from the north of the Litani River and from the Bekaa valley, an eastern area Hezbollah uses to transport weaponry. The NNA also reported that Israeli shells hit the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon's Nepalese battalion in the border town of Mays al-Jabal.

Stop the war UN chief Antonio Guterres called on Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah to "stop the war" at the start of a visit to Beirut on Friday. "My strong appeal to those parties, to Hezbollah and to Israel, is for a ceasefire to stop the war," Guterres said.

Guterres launched a \$325 million humanitarian appeal to support Lebanon as it responds to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people by the war.

Israeli strikes continued on Friday, including an attack that killed eight people in the south Lebanese village of Miyeh w Miyeh near the port city of Sidon, according to the health ministry.

## Trump says US bombed Iran's Kharg Island, threatens its oil infrastructure

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

President Donald Trump said Friday the US military had heavily bombed targets on Iran's Kharg Island, which handles almost all of Iran's crude exports, and he threatened to hit the island's oil infrastructure.

"The United States Central Command executed one of the most powerful bombing raids in the History of the Middle East, and totally obliterated every MILITARY target in Iran's crown jewel, Kharg Island," Trump said on social media. "I have chosen NOT to wipe out the Oil Infrastructure on the Island. However, should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider."

The United States and Israel have treaded carefully around the island,



but Trump administration officials have been reported as saying that capturing Kharg was on the table as the war in West Asia persists. The island, located around 30 kilometers (19 miles) off the Iranian mainland, handles roughly 90 percent of Iran's crude exports, according to a recent JP Morgan note. Any move on the territory, which is about one-third the size of Manhattan, would have swift

repercussions, experts said. "A direct strike would immediately halt the bulk of Iran's crude exports, likely triggering severe retaliation in the Strait of Hormuz or against regional energy infrastructure," JP Morgan said. Iranian strikes have all but halted maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz -- through which a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas normally pass -- and have also impacted oil infrastructure in other Gulf states.

Trump on Friday said the US Navy would start escorting tankers through the straits "very soon" to restore oil exports as he struggles to tackle soaring US gas prices.

Kharg underwent key developments during Iran's oil expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, with much of the country's coast too shallow for supertankers.

## "Totally Obliterated": Trump Says US Bombed Iran's "Crown Jewel" Kharg Island

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

President Donald Trump said Friday that the United States had heavily bombed military targets on Iran's oil hub Kharg Island and the US Navy would soon begin escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz. In a post on Truth Social, Trump said military targets on Kharg Island, which handles almost all of Iran's crude exports, had been "totally obliterated" in "one of the most powerful bombing raids in the History of the Middle East." He said he had chosen not to target oil infrastructure on the island for now. "Our Weapons are the most powerful and sophisticated that the World has ever known but, for reasons of decency, I have chosen NOT to wipe out the Oil Infrastructure on the Island. However, should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider this decision," the US president said. He said Iran has "no ability to defend anything that we want to attack". "There is nothing they can

do about it! Iran will NEVER have a nuclear weapon, nor will it have the ability to threaten the United States of America, the Middle East or, for that matter, the World! Iran's Military, and all others involved with this Terrorist Regime, would be wise to lay down their arms, and save what's left of their country, which isn't much," he said. With oil prices spiking, Trump was asked when the US Navy would begin escorting tankers through the Gulf's critical Strait of Hormuz. "It'll happen soon, very soon," he said. Iranian strikes have all but halted maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas normally pass. Several top Iranian officials joined a defiant pro-government rally in Tehran, meanwhile, marching alongside demonstrators waving banners reading "Death to America" and "Death to Israel." As the United States intensified its bombing of Iran, Tehran launched a new wave of drone and missile attacks on Israel and its Gulf neighbours. The war between

Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon continued to rage, and the Lebanese health ministry said an Israeli strike on a primary healthcare center in southern Lebanon had killed at least 12 medical personnel on Friday. According to the Lebanese authorities, at least 773 people have been killed by Israeli attacks in Lebanon aimed at wiping out Iranian ally Hezbollah.

The United States and Israel have treaded carefully around Kharg Island until now, but US officials have been reported as saying that capturing the island was potentially on the table.

The Wall Street Journal and New York Times reported on Friday that the Pentagon had dispatched the Japan-based amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli to the region along with its complement of some 2,500 Marines.

Heavy blasts shook Tehran late Friday after the United States vowed to step up air strikes and Iranian state media said a fresh round of missiles had been launched towards Israel. Israeli rescue workers said no casualties were reported.

# US eases some Russian oil sanctions but crude prices stay high

World. (Agency)

The U.S. is temporarily easing some sanctions on Russian oil shipments, reflecting global concerns over sharply higher crude prices due to supply shortages stemming from the Iran war. The move, intended to soothe jittery markets over the disruption of Middle Eastern oil and gas supplies, underlines how the war has boosted Moscow's ability to profit from its energy exports, a pillar of the Kremlin's budget as it presses its invasion of Ukraine. U.S. sanctions will not apply for 30 days on deliveries of Russian oil that's been loaded on tankers as of Thursday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on X. That would give reluctant purchasers a green light to take the oil without worrying that they will run afoul of U.S. sanctions rules.

The Trump administration earlier had granted a 30-day reprieve to refineries in India. Bessent said the "narrowly tailored, short-term measure" was part of President Donald Trump's "decisive steps to promote stability in global energy markets" and to

"keep prices low." Allowing the sale of stranded Russian oil would provide no additional financial benefit for the Russian government because the Kremlin already taxed the oil when it was extracted from the ground, Bessent said. Washington has sanctioned Russia's two biggest oil companies, Lukoil and Rosneft, as part of efforts to end the fighting in Ukraine. Except for the 30-day reprieve for floating oil, those sanctions remain in place.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday the move will help stabilize global energy markets, adding it was impossible to do so "without significant volumes of Russian oil." But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the action "does not help peace." "This easing alone by the United States could provide Russia with about \$10 billion for the war," Zelenskyy said. "It spends the money from energy sales on weapons, and all of this is then used against us." Oil prices

stayed high after the announcement. The price of international benchmark Brent crude eased after the announcement but soon rose again, breaking through \$100 to



trade at \$103.24 per barrel as of 1800 GMT (2 p.m. EDT) Friday. That is still well above \$72.87, where Brent traded on Feb. 27, the eve of the war. The fighting has choked off most tanker transport through

the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, through which 20% of the world's oil supply typically passes. That has dealt a massive energy shock to the global economy and threatened increased inflation around the world. "In the short term this slightly increases available supply on the global market, which helps contain the current spike in oil prices," said Simone Tagliapietra, an energy expert at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. "The impact on prices should therefore be modestly downward, or at least stabilizing." Analysts estimate about 125 million barrels of Russian oil are currently being shipped. That equals five or six days' worth of normal shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, or a bit over one day's worth of global consumption of about 101 million barrels per day.

## Meta Plans To Layoff 20% Staff As AI Costs Mount: Report

New York/San Francisco. (Agency)

Meta is planning sweeping layoffs that could affect 20% or more of the company, three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters, as Meta seeks to offset costly artificial intelligence infrastructure bets and prepare for greater efficiency brought about by AI-assisted workers. No date has been set for the cuts and the magnitude has not been finalised, the people said. Top executives have recently signalled the plans to other senior leaders at Meta and told them to begin planning how to pare back, two of the people said. The sources spoke anonymously because they were not authorised to disclose the cuts. Meta did not immediately comment.

If Meta settles on the 20% figure, the layoffs will be the company's most significant since a restructuring in late 2022 and early 2023 that it dubbed the "year of efficiency." It employed nearly 79,000 people as of December 31, according to its latest filing.

The company laid off 11,000 staffers in November 2022, or around 13% of its workforce at the time. Around four months later, it announced it was cutting another 10,000 jobs. Zuckerberg Focusing On Generative AI Over the last year, CEO Mark Zuckerberg has been pushing Meta to compete more forcefully in generative AI. The company has offered huge pay packages, some worth hundreds of millions of dollars over four years, to court top AI researchers to a new superintelligence team. The company has said it plans to invest \$600 billion to build data centers by 2028. Earlier this week, it acquired Moltbook, a social networking platform built for AI agents. Meta is also spending at least \$2 billion to buy Chinese AI startup Manus, Reuters previously reported. Zuckerberg has alluded to efficiency gains from the investments, saying in January he was starting to see "projects that used to require big teams now be accomplished by a single very talented person." Meta's plans reflect a broader pattern among major U.S. companies, particularly in tech, this year. Executives have pointed to recent improvements in AI systems as one reason for the changes. In January, Amazon confirmed it would cut some 16,000 jobs, amounting to nearly 10% of its workforce. Last month, the fintech company Block chopped nearly half of its staff, with CEO Jack Dorsey explicitly pointing to AI tools and their growing capability to help companies do more with smaller teams. Meta's planned AI investments follow a series of setbacks with its Llama 4 models last year, including criticism that it provided misleading results on the benchmarks it used for early versions. It abandoned the release of the largest version of that model, called Behemoth, which had been due out in the summer.

NEWS BOX

No takers for Mithi cleanup, BMC open to amateurs' bids



Mumbai .(Agency)

With no contractor yet finalised for Mithi river's desilting, which takes up to 90 days, the civic administration is now considering bids from even relatively inexperienced contractors, mayor Ritu Tawde said on Friday. An official said BMC has decided to drop the condition that bids from only experienced contractors with specific machinery will be accepted. Standing committee chairman Prabhakar Shinde said the civic administration has been asked to prepare a backup plan in case no firm comes forward by March 17, the new deadline for bid submission. "In such a scenario, BMC has been directed to carry out desilting using its own machinery and workforce to ensure the pre-monsoon schedule is not delayed," said Tawde. She said BMC officials will closely monitor the work's progress.

76,000 kg of ghee failed quality tests in Gujarat since 2024, Mehsana worst-hit district

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

Minister of State (Health) Praful Pansheriya Thursday informed the Gujarat Assembly that a sizeable section of food samples collected across several districts failed quality checks in the last two years (2024 and 2025). Of the food samples that failed the test, a significant portion comprises milk-based items, including 76,000 kg of ghee. Mehsana, with 24,491 samples, had the highest share of ghee items failing the test.

In Ahmedabad, 4,500 food samples were collected, and 232 samples failed tests, which included 76 kg of paneer and 7,530 kg of ghee worth Rs 41.63 lakh. A total of 703 samples were collected in Patan in 2024 and 2025, of which 61 failed, including 23,943 kg of ghee worth Rs 73.86 lakh and 845 kg of paneer priced at Rs 1.97 lakh.

The data of action taken till January 31 showed 961 samples were collected in Vadodara in 2024 and 1,676 in 2025. The 229 samples that failed quality tests in the district included 246 kg of paneer, 129 kg of ghee, and 2,661 kg of other food items.

The minister also stated that a fine of Rs 80,000 has been collected in Ahmedabad, and Rs 29.6 lakh has been collected in Vadodara in the last two years for the failed food samples.

In Kutch and Gandhinagar, 735 and 606 samples were collected, respectively, in the last two years. Of these, 14 failed in Kutch, and 43 samples were declared unfit in Gandhinagar. The minister noted that 2,249 litres of ghee in Kutch and 17,842 litres of ghee in Gandhinagar were found unfit for consumption.

Oppn raises question on Surat water tank collapse; govt says 'recovered Rs 1.04 cr from agency'

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

In response to a question raised by Congress MLA Anant Patel from the Vansda Assembly constituency regarding the recent water tank collapse in Tadkeshwar village of Surat during testing, Water Supply Minister Ishwarsinh Patel informed the Assembly that seven other projects by Jayanti Super Construction Private Limited (JSCPL), Mehsana — the firm that constructed the Tadkeshwar tank — are currently underway in the state.

Responding to a supplementary question during Question Hour on Friday, Anant Patel asked about similar incidents of water tank collapses reported in Valsad and Navsari and whether the contractor was involved in other projects. Minister of State for Water Supply and Water Resources Ishwarsinh Patel told the Legislative Assembly, "Seven projects by Jayanti Super Construction Private Limited, Mehsana, and its joint ventures are currently under progress in Gujarat. We are continuously monitoring the quality of work at these sites."

"One project each in Surat, Panchmahal, Kutch, Rajkot and Tapi, and two in Navsari, are being executed by Jayanti Super Construction Private Limited, Mehsana, in joint ventures with other agencies," the minister informed the House.

JSCPL, Mehsana, along with Babulal Ambalal Patel, was awarded the project on August 10, 2022, the minister said in response to the question raised by Anant Patel. A 15-metre-high water tank with a capacity of 9 lakh litres in Surat's Tadkeshwar village, built as part of a Rs 21-crore water supply project under the Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board's (GWSSB) Gaypagla Sudharna Juth Pani Purvatha Scheme, collapsed during a trial run on January 19, just days before its scheduled inauguration.

1,483 locations raided, 6 arrested: UP cracks down on LPG black marketing

Lucknow.(Agency)

Stepping up their drive against black marketing of LPG cylinders, amid panic buying triggered by concerns over shortages in the wake of tensions in West Asia, enforcement teams at the district level conducted inspections and raids at 1,483 locations on Friday.

During this operation, four FIRs were registered against LPG distributors, while 20 FIRs were registered against individuals involved in black-marketing LPG cylinders. Six persons were arrested on the spot, while prosecution has been initiated against 19 individuals.

The government said through 4,108 LPG gas distributors operating in the state, delivery of LPG refills has been ensured to consumers according to their bookings. Adequate stock of LPG cylinders is available with distributors, and domestic LPG refills are being supplied as required, it claimed. The Centre has permitted allocation of up to 20% of total consumption for commercial cylinders so that gas supply to hotels, restaurants and other commercial establishments remains unaffected. To monitor the supply system and ensure quick resolution



of any issue, a 24-hour active control room has been established at the office of the Food Commissioner for information related to distribution of petroleum products. Officers of the Food and Civil Supplies Department have been deployed here. In addition, departmental officers and staff have also been posted at the Home Control Room. Control rooms have also

been established in all districts across the state and are functioning continuously. Officials of the District Supply Office and the local administration have been instructed to conduct field visits and ensure supply of petrol, diesel and LPG remains uninterrupted in every part of the state and that the general public does not face any inconvenience.

Bengaluru households report LPG crunch, delivery delays

Among 2,721 respondents to the survey conducted by LocalCircles on LPG booking and delivery, 39% said dealers informed them that cylinders were unavailable or bookings were delayed.

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Many households in Bengaluru have reported delays in receiving domestic LPG cylinders and instances of black marketing over the past week, according to a consumer survey.

Among 2,721 respondents to the survey conducted by LocalCircles on LPG booking and delivery, 39% said dealers informed them that cylinders were unavailable or bookings were delayed. Around 16% said they had to wait longer than usual for delivery, while 10% reported following up multiple times with dealers. Only 23% said booking and delivery were normal. About 12% said they had to buy LPG cylinders from the black market at higher prices.

Among 2,502 respondents on dealer supply updates, 37% said dealers mentioned an



existing supply shortage and 33% said dealers warned of possible delays. About 3% said they paid up to Rs 100 extra per cylinder, while 10% reported paying between Rs 100 and Rs 300

extra per cylinder, with some consumers in the Delhi-NCR region reporting prices ranging from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,800 per cylinder.

'If you are so bothered, go fight for Iran': Sambhal SP seeks explanation for cop's remarks

AIMIM chief Owaisi slams remarks, saying he has no right to tell people how to express themselves

Lucknow. (Agency)

The Sambhal Superintendent of Police (SP) has sought an explanation from Circle Officer Kuldeep Kumar over his remarks during a peace meeting, where he reportedly told people that if the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict bothers them, they could board a plane being sent to bring back Indians stranded in Iran, go there, fight from Iran's side and return.

He added that if the conflict between the two countries begins to affect law and order in India, the authorities would deal with it very firmly. SP Kumar confirmed to The Indian Express that an explanation has been sought from the circle officer over his statement.

In a video doing rounds on social media, Kumar is purportedly heard saying, "Bahut saare logon ko na, unko khujli is baat ki machi hai ki sahab jhagda to ho raha hai Iran ke, Israel ke beech mein aur wo beech mein na apni tandi

ghuse, ghusaye pade hain. Bhai agar itni dikkat hai to aap baith jao jahaz mein. Jab jahaz lene ja raha hai wahan Iran mein fanse hue Bharatiyon ko, to jahaz mein baith jao aur chale jao aur jao lado Iran ki taraf se laut ke aa jao. Lekin kisi doosre do deshon ke beech mein



jhagda ho raha hai aur us jhagde ka agar hamare desh mein kanoon vyavastha par koi asar padega to hum phir ilaaj karenge bahut badhiya wala. (I am saying that many people seem to be itching over this issue — there is a conflict going on between Iran and Israel, yet they are trying to poke their noses into it. If it

bothers you so much, then go ahead and board a plane. When the plane goes to bring back the Indians stranded in Iran, you can sit in it, go there, fight from Iran's side, and then come back. But if two other countries are fighting and that conflict starts affecting law and order in our country, then we will deal with it very firmly.)

He also says that no slogans, placards or chants against any country should be raised during "Alvida or Friday" prayers, stressing that international conflicts are matters for the countries involved to resolve. "But we will not tolerate anyone coming here and disturbing the atmosphere of our country. If there is a dispute between Iran and the US or any other country, they should resolve it themselves; if required, the government will look into it," he says.

Police, he said, would trace the source of posters and slogans and take action accordingly.

Bengaluru's dhobi ghats face water crisis as summer drains borewells

There are more than 30 dhobi ghats in the city and most of them are dependent on the traditional wells and borewells.

BENGALURU.(Agency)

With increasing heat amidst summer, water level in wells used by dhobi ghats in different locations in the city has decreased. This has led to a sticky situation for washermen whose customers are mostly hotels, hospitals and even private dry cleaners. There are more than 30 dhobi ghats in the city and most of them are dependent on the traditional wells and borewells. A dhobi ghat in Ulsoor Lake is more than 50 years old and it houses over 110 washermen and their families. Harikishan, President, Halsuru Dhobighat Madivala Sangha, said, "We are dependent on a well and a borewell. The water in the well is always to the brim because of the availability of water in Ulsoor Lake.

However, now water in the well is reduced and it will go down the next month also because the water in the lake has been drained out for rejuvenation by Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). Though the borewell doesn't go dry completely,

the force of water will reduce. During these three months of summer, we make sure to wash clothes in shifts." Similarly, Ashok Nagar Madiwalara Kshema Abhivruddhi Sangha is struggling to get attention of officials to get one large and old well cleaned as water scarcity concern peaks during April.

Lokesh P, President of the Sangha, said, "There are three wells and the water level has dropped from 40 feet to 20 feet in two wells already. The third well is caught with plastic and polluted water. Our request to GBA to get it desilted and restored so that washermen community is benefitted has fallen on deaf ears. Giving timely service to hospitals and hotels has become our biggest concern in this peak summer season. Sometimes, we request them for extra time due to water shortage."

When asked about opting for water tanker services, Lokesh said that with meagre money they earn, opting for tankers creates a hole in their pocket.

Accused shot at after 'attacking' State Monitoring Cell personnel in Gujarat

Second such incident in 3 months of accused person being shot by SMC officer after being 'attacked' during transport across state lines

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

A RAJASTHAN resident, wanted under the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime Act (GujCTOC) and in several cases of liquor bootlegging, suffered a gunshot wound to the arm after allegedly "attempting to murder" a personnel of the State Monitoring Cell (SMC) of the Gujarat Police on Friday.

Sukhlal alias Shakaji alias Shankar Rooplal Dangi (Patel) suffered a gunshot wound to his right arm when he allegedly tried to use his handcuffed hands to throttle the driver of a car in which he was being transported to Gandhinagar from Udaipur.

Dangi was booked for attempt to murder in an FIR registered at the SMC police station in Gandhinagar, on the basis of a

complaint by Head Constable (HC) Jagdish Ranchhod.

The FIR stated that the State Monitoring Cell (SMC), on the basis of investigation, deduced the location of Sukhlal alias Shakaji alias Shankar Rooplal Dangi (Patel), resident of Mavli village of Udaipur district in Rajasthan. Dangi is allegedly a bootlegger and wanted by the SMC in several cases. He was also booked under the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GujCTOC) Act in 2025.

In the FIR, HC Jagdish Ranchhod said that he, along with inspector B H Rathod, ASI Tanmaykumar Paul and HC Ranveersinh Dalpatsinh had gone in his own vehicle to

apprehend Dangi on March 12. They had hired a private driver named Kishankumar Manu Gohel. When they reached Dangi's location,



they cordoned the back door and knocked on the front door. Dangi allegedly attempted to run out the back but was apprehended by the staff stationed there. After his identity was confirmed, the SMC

team took Dangi to Pratapnagar police station in Udaipur and informed them of their intention to bring him to Gandhinagar.

Dangi was handcuffed and made to sit in the middle of the back seat of his own car, flanked by Dalpatsinh and ASI Tanmaykumar Paul on either side. HC Jagdish Ranchhod stated that he drove the vehicle while PI BH Rathod sat in the front passenger seat. The Head Constable's own car meanwhile was driven by the hired driver.

The FIR stated, "At 11:25 am, when we had reached a little ahead of the Shamlaji RTO checkpoint on the way to Gandhinagar, Dangi began hitting me on the head with the handcuffs on his wrists and

brought them over my head in a noose. I felt the force around my neck and could not breathe. Since I was driving, my balance went off and all our lives were put at risk. You (Inspector) drew your Glock pistol service weapon and in spite of warning Dangi that you (Inspector) would shoot if he did not release his hold when he tightened his grip, you fired the weapon, hitting him in his right arm. The bullet went through the glass of the back right door of the vehicle."

The FIR added that HC Jagdish Ranchhod, during this scuffle, lost control of the vehicle, which had then hit the railing on the left side of the road and had come to a stop. The front bumper of the vehicle was damaged and punctured the front left wheel.

# CBI's image has taken a hit in Kejriwal case

WHEN Arvind Kejriwal dumped Anna Hazare to pursue his political ambitions, he surely must have known that no political party could survive without adequate funding. Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena, which was established as a political party in the mid-1960s, could function as such only after it gained control of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. It was widely rumoured that the Sena subsisted mainly on the 10 per cent its corporators earned on every contract signed in their respective wards. Every party, including the BJP — the "party with a difference" — has to find sources to finance its expenses, like paying wages to full-time workers and organising public meetings. I am convinced that AAP is no exception.

I met Kejriwal only once, about two decades ago. Former Union Cabinet Secretary, BG Deshmukh, Dr RK Anand, a leading paediatrician of Mumbai and an activist against malpractices in the medical profession, and I had set up in 2002 an NGO, the Public Concern for Governance Trust (PCGT), aimed at defending honest government officers. It was Deshmukh who invited Kejriwal to interact with the trustees of the PCGT. He obliged. He was then an income tax officer serving in Delhi. Kejriwal told us that he had placed a chair on the pavement outside his office, where he sat for an hour each day before office hours.

People who could not obtain their PAN cards or I-T refunds without paying bribe used to approach him to get their work done without any hassle. No wonder I was taken aback when reports claimed that Kejriwal had ordered a jacuzzi to be installed at the Delhi CM's residence. It was an unnecessary luxury that seemingly changed his public perception as a man of the people.

The trial court in Delhi that absolved Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia in the excise policy case was very harsh on the CBI's investigating officer (IO). The officer must have been under immense pressure from his bosses who had to comply with the orders of the political leadership. One may argue that the CBI's top brass should have resisted political pressure. I know of many senior police leaders who politely refuse to comply with "irregular" orders. But I am reminded of a conversation I had with top leaders of the Gujarat Police in 2002 after the riots that broke out in the wake of the Godhra train massacre. Then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had pulled up Gujarat's then Chief Minister Narendra Modi for failing to do his Raj Dharma! I paid a visit to Ahmedabad and asked top police officers, who had worked under my command, why they had failed.

They informed me that the political leadership was different from any I had worked with during my career. It would not just stop at transferring officers who confronted it!

The tragedy is that the reputation of a premier investigating agency like the CBI has been badly dented by the recent judgment. How will the CBI regain its credibility? Is it permanently to be dubbed a "caged parrot"? Even run-of-the-mill police investigators, like the ones commissioners and superintendents of police across the country rely upon daily to crack difficult cases, are not "caged parrots". They are supposed to establish the truth, and they do so routinely.

The BJP has one overpowering intent. It wants double-engine, and now triple-engine governments, in every state of the Union. It has used various means to achieve this dream.

Winning over elected opponents is, perhaps, a legitimate method in a democratic polity, but, allegedly, targeting opponents by using Central investigation agencies, like the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate, is a relatively novel method. West Bengal without the Trinamool Congress, Tamil Nadu without the DMK and Kerala without the CPM translates to an India drifting far away from federalism. It is a jarring thought.

# CCTV cameras intrude into privacy of classrooms

The more controversial use of cameras comprises observing and assessing teachers' performance and students' discipline

The CBSE and other boards require the installation of CCTV cameras in all schools, including corridors and classrooms. The rising rate of crime involving students justifies, even necessitates, this. Its aim is to keep students and staff safe and help identify those who commit crimes or show anti-social behaviour. Surveillance technology is common in public places and is lawful. But the use of cameras in schools raises some questions. Are classrooms public or private spaces? Do students and teachers expect privacy within school precincts? Schools have restricted access: they are not fully public, like parks. When entering a school, students and staff join a community where individual rights are shaped by the broader needs of the school. Individual rights must be balanced with the community's right to a safe, orderly environment. Usually, school activities are more regulated than those at home. But teachers and students do not want their actions and conversations to be constantly monitored as it can be detrimental to the teacher-student relationship. Teachers need to be enabled to discuss sensitive issues with students. Another aim of surveillance technology could be to observe the 'performance' of teachers and students in the classroom. But its more controversial use comprises observing and assessing teacher performance and students' discipline. The use of surveillance technology has the potential to intrude on private lives and activities by capturing and recording their personal information with or without their knowledge or consent. Technology should provide a solution to a problem and not simply be a quick-fix or a knee-jerk reaction to a particular incident.

The impact on pedagogy also deserves careful examination. Surveillance in classrooms can lead to a chilling effect, stifling open inquiry, which lies at the heart of learning. In a classroom where every question and answer is recorded, a student hesitates to raise her hand, fearing that a 'silly' mistake might be captured and later scrutinised by parents, administrators or even classmates. Similarly, a teacher may avoid encouraging discussions around sensitive or controversial topics, worrying how a momentary lapse or nuanced explanation could be misinterpreted. These subtle shifts can undermine the trust and freedom essential for genuine educational growth.

Cameras in the classroom do not lead to an improvement in teaching, especially if they are used to evaluate teachers, finds a 2011 study by Jack Hassard. According to a report, 85% of the schools in Britain have CCTVs. One has over 100 cameras inside its buildings -- two in each classroom and 40 in hallways, cafeterias and other areas. The monitoring has had a mixed reception in the UK. Teachers cite concerns that the cameras are not



installed for safety reasons, but to judge them. A teachers' union conducted a study in the UK and discovered that 41% of the teachers claimed the cameras were used to find evidence that led to "negative views" of the staff being monitored. A study by the National Association of School Psychologists in the US shows that there is no clear evidence that the use of metal detectors, security cameras or guards in schools is effective in preventing school violence and providing a safe environment. Studies have shown that their presence negatively impacts students' perceptions of safety and even increase fear among them. Restrictive school security measures have the potential to harm learning environments. Both teachers and students can feel vulnerable in such a panoptic classroom situation where cameras can slip into an evaluative role that seeks to catch you doing something wrong, rather than being a tool to help one see more clearly. In such classrooms, neither teachers nor students feel comfortable because education processes are social processes carried out in an environment of trust and freedom. The installation of

cameras affects students' psyche as they may not respond in a natural way during the teaching-learning processes. Krishna Kumar, noted educationist, has rightly observed: "Think about the meaning of growing up and learning under the shining eyes of a CCTV. Parents are watching you in real time. They watch you as you hesitatingly stand up and try to answer a question the teacher has asked. They watch you as you whisper in your desk mate's ear. You go home and the parents ask you why you didn't know the right answer, why you talked in class and so on. You don't know where to hide, what to do to save your limited, fragile honour."

We also need to realise whether these cameras are going to 'fix' the pedagogy by the nanny state, as it does with the curriculum -- pre-deciding what to think rather than how to think. As Sarah Brown Wessling has observed, "The great thing about the camera is that it catches everything that is going on. The bad thing about the camera is that it catches everything that is going on." The truism that the 'destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms' cannot be equated with crafting destiny under surveillance.

# Shameful rhetoric: Khaira's remarks belittling women cross the line

Only days earlier, CM Bhagwant Mann himself faced allegations from the Congress that he had made unsavoury remarks about women during a public speech in Ludhiana

THE uproar in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha over remarks linked to Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira has once again exposed the deeply troubling tone of political discourse in the state. The Assembly's decision to pass a censure motion against Khaira for his alleged derogatory comments about women in connection with the government's Rs 1,000 monthly allowance scheme is, in principle, justified. Public representatives must be held to the highest standards of language and conduct, especially when speaking about women and the poor. Khaira's remarks are insensitive and demeaning. Political disagreement over welfare schemes is legitimate, even necessary. But questioning such initiatives through language that appears to belittle women or mock the beneficiaries crosses the line from criticism into contempt. The AAP government cannot claim the moral high ground without confronting its



own contradictions. Only days earlier, CM Bhagwant Mann himself faced allegations from the Congress that he had made unsavoury remarks about women during a public speech in Ludhiana. Congress leaders have approached the Punjab State Women's Commission seeking a case against the Chief Minister, arguing that his anecdote about a female student during an event conveyed a disrespectful message. The episodes underscore a larger malaise: the casual normalisation of sexist rhetoric in political speech. Instead of engaging in serious debate over the design, affordability and effectiveness of welfare programmes, political leaders too often resort to cheap jibes and inflammatory language. Such conduct demeans the Assembly and diminishes public trust in democratic institutions. The dignity of women should never become a weapon in partisan battles. Whether in government or opposition, leaders who cross the line must apologise and reflect on the consequences of their words. Punjab's politics needs far greater responsibility from all sides of the aisle.

# Viksit Bharat is our grand strategy

It's necessary to evaluate who India's partners really are in the pursuit of this goal

IN the midst of a turbulent, uncertain world destabilised by its most powerful nation, it is worth asking what exactly is India's grand strategy and are our policies, at home and overseas, serving the cause of pursuing the goal of Viksit Bharat that we have set for ourselves. In his monumental study, Strategy: A History (2013), Lawrence Freedman says a strategy is about "getting more out of a situation than the starting balance of power would suggest. It is the art of creating power." Power itself, as we know from Bertrand Russell and many others, has multiple dimensions. Hence, strategies come in all shapes and sizes with varying durations of execution.

What, however, is a "grand strategy"? On this too there are multiple definitions depending on the sphere of activity one is studying. Militaries, businesses and, indeed, nations have their "grand strategy". A long-term plan for not just the 'creation of power' but also its retention and deployment. What then is India's "grand strategy"? It is now commonplace for many to suggest that 'multi-alignment' is today India's grand strategy, just as non-alignment was. This is a wrong way of viewing both concepts. Non-alignment, multi-alignment and indeed even alignment are only means to an end. They are not ends in themselves.

India's grand strategy, as my intellectual guru on this subject, the late K Subrahmanyam, often said, is its re-emergence as a developed nation, recognising that "Knowledge, not weapons, will be the currency of power in this century." Subrahmanyam wrote in a 2012 essay, "The Constituent Assembly's oath in 1947 implied that India would promote world peace for the welfare of mankind, including its own population, and it would assume its rightful global position by developing itself to the standards of the industrialised world." This, he suggested, was as good a definition as any of India's grand strategy. An overpowering idea that captured the

imagination of the leadership of the Indian national movement was that the Indian subcontinent had once been home to a prosperous economy and even as recently as the 18th century, it accounted for one-fourth of the global economy, with China accounting for another one-fourth. As the painstaking statistical work of the British historian Angus Maddison showed, both China and India had each accounted for close to 25 per cent of the world's income in 1700. This had shrunk to less than 5% for both by 1950. Both countries overthrew colonialism and have sought to regain their share of the global income. Independent India's national agenda — its grand strategy, so to speak — has been to seek an international order that would enable it to pursue its economic development and modernisation, seeking to restore its due status in the comity of nations and its due share of world income and trade. There is, however, a caveat. As Subrahmanyam says in the 2012 essay, "The other aspects of India's grand strategy related to governance and development. No other country is comparable to India in terms of its diversity of religions, languages and ethnicities. Consequently, unity is only possible under a secular, pluralistic, democratic and quasi-federal constitution." In relating the pursuit of economic development to a conducive global environment, Subrahmanyam emphasised that the character of the Indian political system and governance at home is an important second leg of India's grand strategy. This should never be forgotten. Consider the present moment in world affairs. Are the actions of the US and

Israel likely to create a global, and regional, environment conducive to India's economic development? If not, should we not be objecting to their actions rather than remain mute? Will the destabilisation of West Asia not slow down India's journey towards Viksit Bharat? If so, does the Modi government's present stance fit in with our grand strategy? Our strategic partnership with the US was based on the assumption that the US would be a partner in the pursuit of India's grand strategy. Recent



developments and statements from the Trump administration suggest that the US can no longer be regarded as a 'strategic' and 'trusted' partner in the pursuit of such a goal. Our global personality as a liberal, plural and secular democracy has been defined by our

constitutional principles and values. If the world is becoming less tolerant of such values and if nations led by leaders who are bigoted and authoritarian are becoming more assertive, ought we not to reiterate our interests based on our grand strategy?

The military and economic policies of major powers are not creating a global environment that would be conducive to India's emergence as a developed economy and a liberal, plural and secular democracy. Against this background, how we govern ourselves at home and pursue our development becomes even more important.

Are the policies being followed at home likely to help us meet the goals of Atmanirbharata and Viksit Bharat? An increasingly communalised ruling dispensation that pursues policies that slow down economic development and make it less egalitarian is, by definition, not pursuing the goal of Viksit Bharat as defined by our constitutional view of a grand strategy. It is precisely for this reason that the Modi government should take a more long-term view of developments at home and overseas and examine whether they serve our national interest. The problem with much scholarship these days is that it views domestic and global events in a piecemeal manner without grasping their impact on our goal of becoming Viksit Bharat. With fundamental changes taking place in the global system, it is necessary to evaluate who India's partners really are in the pursuit of the goal of Viksit Bharat. The task at hand, to be sure, is entirely in our hands, but the external environment matters too.

## Sukhu inspects Rs92.33-crore Sukh Ashray Complex at Luthan, orders speedy completion

**Dharamshala.(Agency)**

Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu inspected the under-construction Chief Minister's Model Village Sukh Ashray Complex at Luthan in Kangra district, being built at an estimated cost of about Rs92.33 crore. During the inspection on Friday, the Chief Minister directed the concerned officials to expedite the construction work and ensure that the project is completed within the stipulated timeframe. He said the present state government is committed to the welfare of vulnerable and needy sections of society and is undertaking several initiatives to strengthen social support systems across the state. The Sukh Ashray Complex is part of the government's efforts to provide better care and support facilities for disadvantaged groups. MLA Sanjay Ratan was also present on the occasion.

## UP moves against blackmarketing of LPG cylinders; monitoring underway

**Lucknow.(Agency)**

The Uttar Pradesh government has initiated strict action against blackmarketing of petrol, diesel, and LPG with authorities conducting raids across the state, officials said on Saturday. A series of checks are ongoing following the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The Food and Civil Supplies Department in coordination with district administrations has cracked down on hoarders across the state to ensure uninterrupted fuel supply. The Chief Secretary has told district magistrates that necessary steps must be taken to maintain the availability of petrol, diesel, and LPG cylinders, and that the supply chain must be kept under constant surveillance. On Friday, enforcement teams conducted inspections and raids at 1,483 locations across various districts. During these operations, four FIRs were registered against LPG distributors, while 20 additional FIRs were lodged against other individuals involved in the blackmarketing of cooking gas. During the course of these actions, six individuals were arrested, while prosecution proceedings have been initiated against 19 individuals. Through the 4,108 LPG distributors operating within the state, consumers are being ensured the delivery of refills strictly in accordance with their bookings. Distributors currently hold adequate stocks of LPG cylinders, and domestic cylinders are being made available as per requirements.

The Central government has authorized the allocation of up to 20 per cent of the total consumption volume for commercial cylinders. This measure ensures that gas supplies to hotels, restaurants, and other commercial establishments remain unaffected. To monitor the supply chain and facilitate the swift resolution of any issue, a 24-hour control room has been set up at the office of the Commissioner of Food and Civil Supplies. Officials from the Food and Civil Supplies Department have been assigned duties at this facility.

## BJP slams Himachal govt for excluding Vigilance Bureau from RTI, calls move 'Black Order'

**Dharamshala.(Agency)**

The Himachal Pradesh unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party has strongly criticised the state government for bringing the State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (SV&ACB) outside the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, alleging that the decision was aimed at shielding corruption.

In a press statement issued here on Friday, BJP state spokesperson Sanjay Sharma termed the decision of the Congress-led government a "black chapter in democracy" and accused it of attempting to provide official protection to corrupt officials and leaders.

Sharma alleged that state authorities had wrongly interpreted provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2005, particularly Section 24(4), which exempts intelligence and security organisations from RTI provisions. He said the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau was an investigative agency dealing with corruption cases and not an intelligence body, and therefore should not be excluded from the RTI framework.

Questioning the government's intent, he said the Congress government, which had come to power promising "systemic change," was now trying to remove the primary anti-corruption agency from public accountability.

The BJP spokesperson claimed that bringing the vigilance bureau under the "security and intelligence" category would prevent citizens from seeking information about the progress of corruption investigations, delays in filing charge sheets and details related to major scams.

# Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Inaugurates Six Amrit Stations Also Dedicates Multiple Infrastructure Projects and Flags off new train in West Bengal

**The Sikh Times**

Maligaon, 14th March: The Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today dedicated, inaugurated various infrastructure development projects and flagged off new train service in West Bengal, further strengthening connectivity and railway development scenario in the state. As part of the railway initiatives, six redeveloped railway stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme i.e Kamakhya, Tamluk, Haldia, Barabhum, Anara and Siuri Amrit stations were inaugurated along with dedication of two key infrastructure projects to the nation, marking a significant step towards enhancing passenger amenities and modernizing station infrastructure. A new train service between Purulia - Anand Vihar Terminal (Delhi) was also flagged off by the Hon'ble Prime Minister further improving the connectivity in the region. These projects and services reflect the continued focus on expanding capacity,

improving travel experience through modern rail infrastructure. The Prime Minister stated that a vigorous campaign is underway across the country to modernize the Indian Railways. He also pointed out that the Central Government is rapidly expanding the railway infrastructure in West Bengal. He emphasized that these projects will give new momentum, boosting trade and industry and making life easier for lakhs of people by providing them new opportunities. Among the newly redeveloped stations that have been



inaugurated, Kamakhya Railway Station, has been provided with upgraded facilities and modern passenger friendly infrastructure. The redevelopment includes a new station building with an improved entrance lobby and circulating area, renovation of platforms with Kota-stone surfacing and construction of a 12-metre

wide Foot Over Bridge (FOB) equipped with lift facilities to enhance passenger convenience and accessibility. Passenger amenities such as waiting halls, toilet blocks, parking facilities and modern signage systems have also been upgraded. In addition, multi-theme lighting and beautification works incorporating local art and cultural elements have been carried out to enhance the overall aesthetics of the station and its surroundings, thereby improving the passenger experience. The redevelopment of Kamakhya station reflects Indian Railways' continued commitment to modernising railway infrastructure and providing enhanced travel facilities to passengers. Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, a total of 92 railway stations across Northeast Frontier Railway are being redeveloped in phases, including 25 stations in West Bengal, which will significantly improve passenger amenities and contribute to better connectivity and regional development.

## Himachal Governor visits Ved Ashram, praises saints' role in preserving Vedic traditions

**Dharamshala.(Agency)**

Kavinder Gupta, Governor of Himachal Pradesh, visited Ved Ashram at Yol during his two-day tour of Kangra district and met spiritual leader Swami Ram Swaroop Yogacharya, highlighting the role of saints in preserving and promoting Vedic traditions.

The Governor was accorded a warm welcome by the district administration and members of the ashram on his arrival.

During the visit, Gupta interacted with Swami Ram Swaroop Yogacharya and discussed the relevance of Vedic teachings in contemporary society. He also participated in a Havan-Yagya and offered prayers for peace, prosperity and the well-being of the people.

The Governor listened to Swami Ji's discourse on Vedic knowledge and appreciated the spiritual atmosphere of the ashram.

Lauding the efforts of the spiritual leader, Gupta said that Swami Ram Swaroop Yogacharya has been making significant contributions to the propagation of the Vedas both in India and abroad.

He observed that saints and spiritual leaders play a crucial role in preserving and promoting the timeless wisdom of the Vedas in the modern era. While society is advancing rapidly, he said, it is equally important to remain rooted in India's ancient spiritual and cultural heritage.

The Governor noted that saints act as guiding lights by spreading the message of Vedic knowledge, moral values and spiritual discipline. Their selfless efforts, he said, help society understand the enduring relevance of Vedic teachings in leading a balanced, ethical and harmonious life.

Gupta also urged the younger generation to stay connected with their cultural roots and uphold India's rich spiritual legacy while embracing modernity. He expressed hope that Ved Ashram would continue to inspire future generations through the promotion of Vedic knowledge and culture.

# Mumbai engineer killed in tanker attack near Iraq; family says he was forced to join vessel just before war

**Mumbai.(Agency)**

Kandivli resident Deonandan Prasad Singh (54) was killed after the Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker MT Safesea Vishnu, on which he was serving, came under attack near Khor Al Zubair Port, close to Basra, Iraq, on Wednesday, according to the director general of shipping, ministry of port, shipping and waterways. In a press release on March 12, the ministry had confirmed the death of one Indian seafarer. An official said Singh, serving as the additional chief engineer (superintendent) aboard the vessel, died following the attack.

Singh's family alleged he had been on shore duty for over seven years after leaving sailing work, having served on the engineering side for almost 25 years, before the company

forced him to rejoin a ship three days before the war began when the US and Israel attacked Iran on Feb 28.

"Singh was killed almost two weeks after joined the vessel at Iraq. It is sort of forcing him to join as he has signed the agreement with the company and in a corporate world one has to abide the company's rules and regulations. Despite having stopped sailing and having taken a shore desk job, he was sent to die. The company forced him to join the ship as per the contract clause he had signed and joined the ship in Iraq three days prior to the war began," a family member said.

"Singh sustained severe injuries during the incident and later succumbed to them. Authorities and relevant maritime agencies have



been informed, and an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the attack is underway," a ministry official said.

Following the incident, all crew

members abandoned the vessel and entered the water. They were rescued by an STS tug. The Iraqi Coast Guard evacuated all 28 crew members, including 16 Indian nationals and 12 Filipino nationals, and transported them the port of Basra.

The DG Shipping office in Mumbai remained tight-lipped. The shipping company, Executive Management or Bravo Shipping Management, was yet to revert to a mail sent by. The management of MT Safesea Vishnu and

associated stakeholders expressed condolences to Singh's family. The alumni cell of BIT Sindri posted a condolence message on on Facebook.

# TVK district secretaries mull alliance deals to trounce DMK

**Chennai.(Agency)**

In a development that could alter the dynamics of the upcoming Assembly polls, the debutant TVK, which is yet to find an ally despite party president Vijay offering a share in power, convened an urgent online meeting of its district secretaries to seek their opinion on "joining an alliance" to "defeat the evil force DMK" in the polls. Sources said party general secretary N Anand, who convened and chaired the meeting, did not mention which alliance the party could join. However, considering the prevailing situation in the state, they said that the alliance implied was the AIADMK-BJP bloc of which the latter has been identified by the TVK as its "ideological enemy".



Most of the district secretaries to whom spoke to said that though they were not asked which alliance to join, majority of the attendees strongly voiced support for joining an alliance to defeat the DMK. Sources said that of the 138 district

secretaries, over 120 attended the meeting, while some missed since it was a last-minute call. The meeting that began around 12.30 pm concluded in less than 30 minutes. Except Anand, none of the other top functionaries, like KA Sengottaiyan, KG Arunraj, and Aadhav Arjuna, were present.

"Since it was a zoom call, everybody was able to speak and the majority of the district secretaries asked the general secretary (Anand) to join an alliance to defeat the evil force DMK," a district secretary from the western region told.

**We will stand with Vijay on alliance decision: Dist secys**

"Our general secretary Anand did not ask our opinion on which party to align with. But, we all have conveyed that it is impossible to defeat the evil force unless we join an alliance," another district secretary from the Delta region told.

According to the district secretary from the western region, Anand had asked their district secretaries that some party functionaries may not get a seat to contest in the assembly election, if they join an alliance.

# Class 9 student's death sparks late-night protests against Jalandhar school

**Jalandhar.(Agency)**

Tension gripped the area outside a Jalandhar school late Friday night after the death of a 14-year-old student under suspicious circumstances triggered protests by her family members and residents. The deceased was a Class 9 student.

While the police initially suspected it to be a case of suicide, family members alleged that she had been murdered, and claimed negligence and concealment of information by the school management.

The situation turned tense as protesters gathered outside the school late Friday night and raised slogans against the police and the school authorities. The school gate was eventually opened with police intervention.

The 14-year-old studied at a particular branch of the school but used to visit another branch daily for tennis practice. On Friday, her mother dropped her off at school as usual. However, when she did not return

home in the evening, the family became worried. Later, her body was found near F-Block of the Jalandhar Heights flats. The family raised several questions about the circumstances leading to the girl's death. They pointed out that if she had reached Jalandhar Heights on her own, how was her tennis kit found in the school ground? They also claimed that the entry register at the tennis court showed that she was marked "present".

Her parents also alleged that the school management was hiding crucial information and that both the school authorities and the police were delaying the release of CCTV footage. Protesters demanded a transparent investigation and shouted slogans against the police administration.

Police officials said their preliminary assessment suggested suicide, but admitted that it was still unclear how the girl reached the Jalandhar Heights area.

# Facing heat, TN eateries turn to wood that puts them back by up to Rs 10,000 /tonne

Prices vary by type of wood, with seemai karuvelam costing Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000 per tonne, while better-quality wood fetches close to Rs 10,000, said a trader.

**Madurai. (Agency)**

The shortage of commercial LPG cylinder has paved the way for the return of the firewood, as many a restaurant and small eatery across the state have turned to the traditional way for cooking needs.

K Sermampandi Nadar, whose family has been running a firewood shop on Dr Natesan Road in Mylapore for 35 years, said sales of coal and casuarina firewood have doubled since the LPG crisis began. "Earlier I used to sell nearly 500kg of coal a day; now it has increased to around 750kg. The quantity of logs that I sell also doubled, from 2 tonnes to 4 tonnes," he said. He said he usually supplies to around 20 restaurants, many of which have doubled their purchase, adding some high-end restaurants have also started buying from him. A private school also placed orders on Friday evening, he said.

M Govindaraj, a second-generation wholesale firewood seller, said hostels and small

biryani shops with enough open space have begun their purchase, adding some mosques are also buying firewood from him for making 'nonbu kanji'.

S Thangaraj, a firewood vendor in Kolathur said he is selling 25 kg of casuarina wood for Rs 450 now (Rs 18 per kg), compared to Rs 400 earlier.

N Swamikannu, another small-scale seller, said his two-tonne stock of firewood was sold out in just three days, and he continues to receive calls from eateries. Firewood seller P Muthumaran from Kasimedu said a popular biryani outlet has doubled its purchase from 10 tonnes to nearly 20 tonnes a day.

The sellers source casuarina firewood from Cuddalore, Tindivanam, Nagapattinam, Perambalur, Tiruchy and Pudukkottai, and also from Andhra Pradesh. Muthumaran



added sourcing firewood from AP has become costlier by nearly Rs 2,000 per tonne. A small biryani shop owner in Mylapore said only a few eateries, which have an open space around, could switch to firewood. "Out of 25 small shops I know, only four could make the shift, while others have closed down. Many fear losing

employees if they shut down," he said. A hotelier in Madurai said the shift to firewood has increased the running costs and has forced price hike.

The traders said rates of firewood have gone up from about Rs 3,000-4,000 per tonne to nearly Rs 10,000 in recent days. Prasanna, a trader at Mattuthavani, said dozens of truckloads of firewood arriving daily from Ramanathapuram district are being sold out within hours. Prices vary by type of wood, with seemai karuvelam costing Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000 per tonne, while better-quality wood fetches close to Rs 10,000, he said.

Basker Badmanaban, a trader from Paramakudi, said labour shortage for wood cutting and transport is also affecting supply, adding transporting one tonne from Ramanathapuram to Madurai costs about Rs 800.

# Govt set to release Sonam Wangchuk from detention months after Leh violence

**The government said the move aims to restore peace and enable constructive dialogue with stakeholders in Ladakh. The detention came in the backdrop of a serious law and order situation that arose in the peace-loving town of Leh on September 24, 2025.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The Centre has decided to revoke the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk under the National Security Act (NSA), months after the law and order situation that arose in Leh in September 2025. According to a statement by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Sonam Wangchuk was detained on September 26, 2025, under the provisions of the National Security Act pursuant to an order issued by the District Magistrate, Leh, with a view to maintaining public order. The detention came in the backdrop of a serious law and order situation that arose in the peace-loving town of Leh on

September 24, 2025. The ministry noted that Wangchuk has already undergone nearly half of the detention period under the Act. The Centre had previously defended the detention, telling the Supreme Court that Wangchuk was the "chief provocateur" behind the September 24 violence in Leh in which four people died and dozens were injured. It has argued that all procedural safeguards under the NSA were followed and that the situation calmed after he was taken into custody.



The government said it has been actively engaging with various stakeholders and community leaders in Ladakh to address the aspirations and concerns of the people

of the region. However, the government noted that the prevailing atmosphere of bandhs and protests has been detrimental to the peace-loving character of society and has adversely affected several sections of the community, including students, job aspirants, businesses, tour operators and tourists, as well as the overall economy. The Ministry of Home Affairs said the government remains committed to fostering an environment of peace, stability, and mutual trust in Ladakh so as to facilitate constructive and meaningful dialogue

with all stakeholders. "In furtherance of this objective, and after due consideration, the government has decided to revoke the detention of Sonam Wangchuk with immediate effect by exercising the powers available under the National Security Act," the statement said. The government also reiterated its commitment to providing all necessary safeguards for Ladakh and expressed hope that the issues concerning the region will be resolved through constructive engagement and dialogue, including through the mechanism of the High-Powered Committee as well as other appropriate platforms.

## India repatriates Iranian ship's non-essential crew from Kochi amid Iran war

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
India has repatriated the non-essential crew members of an Iranian warship that docked in Kochi on March 4 amid the escalating military conflict between Iran and the United States, people familiar with the matter said on Saturday. Over 50 of the 183 crew members have stayed back in India as the ship, IRIS Lavan, continues to remain in Kochi, they said. The non-essential sailors left India on a Turkish airline aircraft. The aircraft landed in Kochi late last night after picking up the bodies of over 80 Iranian sailors from Colombo. The sailors were from another Iranian warship that was sunk by a US submarine off the coast of Sri Lanka on March 4. IRIS Lavan has been stationed in Kochi since March 4 after developing urgent technical issues. The ship was granted emergency docking approval on March 1 following a request from the Iranian side. It is learnt that the Iranian sailors of IRIS Lavan will travel to Iran by road from Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

The repatriation comes at a time when New Delhi is making efforts to ensure safe passage for over two dozen Indian-flagged merchant vessels currently stationed on either side of the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi on Thursday night. The conversation marked the fourth such exchange between the two leaders since the West Asia crisis erupted.

## Madhya Pradesh: Gangster groom arrested from wedding mandap, bride begs cops for leniency

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Cops in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal arrested a gangster from a wedding mandap. The drama however had just begun, as hours later the bride of the man arrived at the Koh-e-Fiza police station, pleading to the cops to show some leniency and allow the groom (gangster) to complete the rituals of the marriage. She requested them to let the wedding be over and then take whatever action they wanted against the groom.

**'My family will be destroyed': Bride tells cops**  
The bride Seema reached the Koh-e-Fiza police station in the city and pleaded with cops to allow the gangster to marry her. Quoted her as saying, "Sahab, my life will be destroyed. What's my fault? I didn't know about the crimes he committed. Guests are waiting at home. Haldi and other rituals have been done."

Crying in front of the officers, the woman pleaded with them to release her fiancé, Akash alias Bhura for just 2 hours, so that the wedding rituals could be completed. However the officers refused her request. She then went ahead and made another startling request – the wedding vows be completed inside the police station itself. This left the personnel on duty both shocked and surprised. The police however did not relent even to this demand of the woman.

**The arrest of the gangster groom**  
On Wednesday a police team reached a wedding venue and arrested Akash Neelkanth, who allegedly has a criminal history and leads an "illegal gang." The guests at the wedding were shocked to see the groom being led away by the police, before the marriage could be solemnized. They just gaped at the entire scene, which seemed to be straight out a Bollywood flick. The police also arrested associates of Akash. These included, Rajamji Thakur, Abhishek Upadhyay, Abhishek Meena, Neeraj Khange, and Amit Oswal. All the accused were presented in a local court and sent to police custody. According to the police, the arrested groom, Akash, is no ordinary criminal. He has at least 31 cases registered against him, including that of murder. He leads a gang, locally known as "Illegal Gang", which has been active in Bhopal since 2018.

## Why LPG, not petrol or diesel, took the hit amid Hormuz choke

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Amid the war in the Middle East, India's LPG supply chain is showing clear signs of stress. There are long queues outside gas agencies. Dozens of restaurants and dhabas have shut, and households are waiting days for refills. That's because the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy shipping lanes, is choked. The US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Tehran's retaliation have disrupted maritime traffic in the Middle East, a region that is a major fossil fuel exporter. India also depends on energy imports from the region. So, why are LPG supplies showing stress first, while petrol and diesel are not? Why do petroleum fuels like petrol and diesel that are also sourced from the region,



remain available in Indian retail markets? The panic over LPG gas cylinders, reported since March 9, has now increased manifold. Such fears were reflected in queues at some CNG, diesel, and petrol stations from March 12. However, they were few and far between. The government has maintained that there is an adequate supply of

petroleum fuel, which is refined to produce petrol and diesel. In the case of LPG too, the government has reiterated that there would be no disruption in supplying the domestic sector. And the panic on the streets, depicted by long queues, fist fights and delays in cylinder delivery has been called by the Centre, a "demand-driven distortion". However, the sale of commercial LPG cylinders has been halted to prioritise domestic consumers. This, plus the soaring prices of LPG refills on the black market, led to the downing of the shutters of several eateries. So when the choke point at Hormuz in the Persian Gulf tightened, LPG supplies felt the shock first. India's kitchens noticed the stress before its petrol pumps and private cars did.

## NHAI disputes pothole claim in 'woman revived after ambulance jolt' case; report flags damaged NH-74 stretch

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Days after the family of a brain-dead woman from Pilibhit claimed she regained consciousness after an ambulance hit a pothole on NH-74, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has disputed references to potholes in the incident. The NHAI, in a letter on Wednesday, said that the highway stretches in the area are "pothole-free and traffic-worthy". The authority added that the stretches are maintained according to prescribed standards. **Report finds several potholes and cracks**

However, a report by The Times of India noted several potholes and cracks on the Bareilly-Pilibhit stretch. The



report mentioned several potholes and cracks on the stretch from Bareilly to Pilibhit — through Rithaura, Hafizganj and Nawabganj. Several stretches were reported to be uneven and damaged, with cracked surfaces

and depressions resembling potholes. NHAI further said that the viral video of the incident does not link the woman's recovery to a pothole but only mentioned about her regaining breath. How brain dead woman regained consciousness after vehicle hit pothole The 50-year-old woman, identified as Vineeta Shukla, was declared brain dead at a Bareilly hospital and jolted back to life while being taken home for her final rites. "It was nothing short of a miracle," Kuldeep Shukla, the woman's husband, told. She was then taken to Neurocity Hospital in Pilibhit. After going through critical medical care, the woman returned home.

## Kerala govt makes U-turn on women's entry to Sabarimala Temple before Assembly polls, opposition trains gun

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Ahead of the Assembly elections in the state this year, the Kerala government has reversed its stance on allowing women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala Temple. **Change in stance before polls**  
The ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in the state has decided to convey to the Supreme Court that it aims to follow the traditions of the temple, and hence, women below the age of 50 should not be allowed inside the religious place. Recently, the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) also decided to inform the apex court that it supported the protection of the Sabarimala Temple's traditions. The government will formally inform the SC of its



new position with an emphasis on the protection of religious customs and traditions before the Assembly polls. Notably, the SC has directed the state government and other parties to clarify their stand on the issue by March 14, with detailed hearings to begin on April 7. **Opposition attacks LDF govt**  
Notably, the SC gave a monumental verdict on September 28, 2018, that allowed women's entry into the temple after 12 years of legal proceedings. The change in stance of the LDF government in the state comes ahead of the elections as according to reports, the BJP and the Congress may use the issue to attack the Pinarayi Vijayan-led administration. Leader of the Opposition and Congress leader, V. D. Satheesan said according to a report by The Week, "In the context of the government deciding to revise the affidavit that supported women's entry into Sabarimala, the CPM—which had claimed to be progressive—should apologise to the public and to the opposition." On the other hand, BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "I had predicted four weeks ago that the government would take a U-turn on the matter. That prediction has now come true."

# Climate Activist Sonam Wangchuk, Detained For Nearly 6 Months, To Be Released

**Sonam Wangchuk was detained on September 26 last year, two days after violent protests over statehood and constitutional protection left four people dead and 50, including security personnel, injured in Ladakh's Leh.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was detained for nearly six months under the National Security Act (NSA) for allegedly inciting a mob with provocative statements in Ladakh's Leh, will be released, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said. The ministry decided to revoke Wangchuk's detention by exercising the powers available under the NSA after "due consideration". The Centre, in its statement, said that Wangchuk had undergone nearly half of the period of detention under the NSA. "Government remains committed to fostering an environment of peace, stability, and mutual trust in Ladakh to facilitate constructive and meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders. In furtherance of this objective, and after due consideration, the Government/MHA

decides to revoke the detention of Sonam Wangchuk with immediate effect. Government reiterates its commitment to providing all necessary safeguards for Ladakh," it said. It added that the central government has been "actively engaging with various stakeholders and community leaders in Ladakh with a view to addressing the aspirations and concerns of the people of the region". "However, the prevailing atmosphere of 'bandhs' and protests has been detrimental to the peace-loving character of the society and has adversely affected various sections of the community, including students, job aspirants, businesses, tour operators, tourists and the overall economy. The



Government reiterates its commitment to providing all necessary safeguards for Ladakh. It remains hopeful that the issues concerning the region will be resolved through constructive engagement and dialogue, including through the mechanism of the High-Powered Committee as well as other appropriate platforms," the statement read. Wangchuk

was detained on September 26 last year, two days after violent protests over statehood and constitutional protection left four people dead and 50, including security personnel, injured in Ladakh's Leh. He was detained under the NSA on the orders of the district magistrate, Leh, to "maintain public order" and was then transferred to Jodhpur prison. The climate activist had been protesting over the effects of climate change on Ladakh's fragile ecosystem and demanding that the Union Territory be provided safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution since 2023. Last year, he held a 35-day fast to press the statehood demand. This soon turned into a violent protest, following which Wangchuk called off his fast saying that his "message of peaceful path had failed".

NEWS BOX

Would've gone for sportsman spirit: Salman Agha on controversial run-out vs BAN

New Delhi. (Agency)

Pakistan's Salman Ali Agha said that he would have done things differently and gone for sportsman spirit after his controversial run-out during the second ODI against Bangladesh on Friday, March 13. The dismissal triggered debate around the Spirit of Cricket. The incident unfolded in the 39th over as Pakistan were building a steady partnership between Agha and Mohammad Rizwan after Bangladesh chose to bowl first. Rizwan nudged the fourth delivery to the bowler's right, where Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz moved across in his follow-through and stopped the ball with his boot, colliding with Agha at the non-striker's end.

With the ball stopping near them and Agha briefly outside his crease, the batter appeared to bend down to pick it up and hand it back. Miraz reacted quickly,



collecting the ball and underarming it onto the stumps at the non-striker's end while Agha was still short of his ground.

Miraz appealed immediately, prompting on-field umpire Tanvir Ahmed to refer the decision upstairs. The TV umpire ruled Agha out after confirming the ball remained in play, and the batter had not grounded his bat behind the crease. Agha, who scored 64 off 62 balls, looked unhappy with the decision and exchanged words with Miraz. The situation briefly heated up as Litton Das joined the discussion before Rizwan stepped in to calm things down. "I think sportsman spirit has to be there," Agha said at the press conference. "What he [Mehidy] has done is in the law. I think if he thinks it's right, it's right, but if you ask me my perspective, I would have done differently. I would have gone for sportsman spirit. We haven't done this [type of thing] previously, we would never do that in the future as well." Agha said that he went to pick the ball thinking that it would have been called dead after it hit his pad and bat.

Formula One: George Russell wins Chinese GP Sprint as Mercedes continue dominant run

New Delhi. (Agency)

George Russell continued his imperious start to the Formula One season, winning the Chinese Grand Prix sprint race at the Shanghai International Circuit on Saturday to stretch his championship lead to 11 points. The Mercedes driver, who started on pole, held off a spirited challenge from the Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton to claim the 19-lap race, adding to his victory at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix last weekend.

RUSSELL AND HAMILTON TRADE BLOWS EARLY

It was anything but straightforward in the opening laps. Russell was overtaken by Hamilton on the very first lap, with the former teammates using the new electric-



powered Boost and Overtake modes to trade positions over the opening seven laps. Hamilton twice passed Russell into the circuit's sweeping Turn 1, only for the Mercedes driver to reclaim the lead on the long back straight each time. The battle continued until Hamilton's tyres faded, allowing Russell to pull clear. Leclerc, Hamilton's Ferrari teammate, was also caught up in the early scrap at the front.

"There's a lot going on, but it makes it quite fun and definitely feels more like a go-kart race in the past," Russell said. "I don't ever remember Formula One being like that, where you have three or four cars fighting for the same position." Hamilton, making his first appearance in China as a Ferrari driver, received a rousing reception from the crowd when he opened his post-race interview with a "Ni hao." The seven-time world champion acknowledged the pace advantage Russell held, saying the Mercedes speed on the straights was proving too much to handle.

SAFETY CAR SHAKES UP THE RACE

The race took a dramatic turn on lap 14 when Nico Hulkenberg's Audi ground to a halt on track, triggering a safety car period.

What's the fuss IPL-linked teams have used Pak players even with shadow ban

← **Sunrisers Leeds ensured that the first-ever Hundred auction was a memorable one as they swooped in to get Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed. Amidst all the talk of the shadow ban, they are not the first team with IPL roots to use Pakistan players.**

LAVERKUSEN. (Agency)

So, the first-ever Hundred auction was expected to catch the imagination of fans. All eight teams were going to battle it out for some of the big names in English cricket, and there were some international stars in the mix as well. The tournament, which started in 2021, got a major facelift in the form of IPL-linked franchises coming to the fore and making significant investments. Then came

the news that Pakistan players were going to be shadow-banned by the four IPL-linked sides during the auction, and others were expected to follow suit. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) stepped in as Michael Vaughan and Harry Brook voiced their concerns about the snub of Pakistani players. They said that players should be bought on merit and not on nationality.

Everyone thought the storm had passed, and the women's auction went by without a single Pakistan player being picked up. Then it was time for the men's auction on March 12, and Haris Rauf found himself not picked. Usman Tariq found a home with Birmingham Phoenix, but the team didn't have a link with an IPL side. Once again, everyone seemed happy and the Hundred auction just kept moving along.

Then came the name of Abrar Ahmed, and up went the paddle from Sunrisers Leeds. Trent Rockets joined in and a bidding war was on. As fans in Pakistan were happy, the ones in India were fuming. The battle started at his base price of 75,000 pounds and went all the way up to 190K. In the end, he was going to wear the orange jersey of the Sunrisers.

Then came the backlash.

There were calls for a boycott of the Sunrisers group, which owns SRH in the IPL. Hashtags like #ShameOnSRH and #BoycottSunrisers



began trending on X. Since then, Sunrisers have offered a clarification.

So why is the fuss all about? Well, for those who are unaware, there has been a shadow ban on Pakistan players in the IPL since 2009 due to the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai. From then until now, Azhar Mahmood has been the only player who took part in the league, but under a British passport. So technically, he

wasn't considered a Pakistan player.

While all this noise continues, something people may have forgotten—or may not know—is the fact that there have been IPL-linked teams that have continued to use Pakistan players in their squads as recently as 2025. So, how many players have played for sides with IPL owners despite the ban being in place?

PAKISTAN PLAYERS AND IPL CONNECTION

When you look at leagues around the globe, particularly those with IPL connections, most teams with Indian owners tend to stay away from the Pakistan contingent.

The SA20, massively supported by its IPL connection, doesn't have any Pakistan players in the mix either.

If you look at the ILT20, the likes of Abu Dhabi Knight Riders, Sharjah Warriorz, Gulf Giants, MI Emirates and Dubai Capitals don't have any Pakistan players in their mix at the moment. The Desert Vipers are the only ones with a strong Pakistani contingent. However, there was one season though, when Abu Dhabi Knight Riders used Imad Wasim in 2024, and he repaid the faith by picking up 11 wickets in 10 matches and scoring 56 runs.

Pakistan Cricket Board plans legal action after Muzarabani skips PSL to join IPL

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is preparing to take legal action against Zimbabwe fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani following his withdrawal from a binding contract with Islamabad United for the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL), according to a report from GeoSuper. Muzarabani had signed with United as a replacement for Shamar Joseph, committing to a reported sum of Rs11 million for the tournament scheduled from March 26 to May 3. However, he instead opted to join Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) as a replacement for Mustafizur Rahman, who was released by the franchise earlier this year on the recommendation of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Muzarabani's decision to break his PSL agreement has been met with a firm response from the PCB, which is moving forward with legal proceedings based on breach of contract. This episode marks the second year in



succession that a player initially contracted to a PSL franchise has chosen to join an IPL team. The previous season saw South African all-rounder Corbin Bosch, selected as a Diamond Pick by Peshawar Zalmi, subsequently join Mumbai Indians as an injury replacement. Following his withdrawal from PSL commitments, Bosch received a one-season ban from participating in the league, reinforcing the PCB's strict stance on such contract violations.

MUZARABANI SET FOR KKR BOW

Muzarabani's recent selection by KKR comes after a strong showing in the T20 World Cup. The Zimbabwean pacer played a key role in helping his national team top their group and reach the Super Eight stage of the competition. During the tournament, Muzarabani took 13 wickets in six matches, placing him just one wicket short of becoming the joint-highest wicket-taker.

F1 2026: Saudi, Bahrain Grand Prix races to be cancelled amid Middle East conflict

New Delhi. (Agency)

Next month's Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Formula One Grands Prix are set to be cancelled over the weekend due to the conflict in the Middle East. Multiple sources told Reuters an announcement, seen within the sport as just a matter of time, was expected by Monday at the latest with a March 20 deadline looming for freight that has to be transported to Bahrain for logistical reasons.

SHANGHAI GP: 5 STORYLINES TO WATCH OUT FOR

Sky Sports television, which has the broadcasting rights in Britain where most of the 11 teams are based, said it understood the races would be called off by Sunday night. U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran are continuing while Iranian drones and missiles have hit some Middle Eastern capitals including Bahrain's Manama, where most team personnel would be staying in hotels. Formula One is racing in China this weekend for the second round of the season after the opener in Australia last

weekend. Sources have indicated previously that neither Middle Eastern race is likely to be replaced or rescheduled, leaving April an empty month for the series and the



championship reduced to 22 rounds.

Bahrain was scheduled for April 12 with the Saudi race in Jeddah on April 19. The Japanese Grand Prix, round three, is on March 29 with the next race then in Miami on May 3. "I think we follow the guidance of the FIA and Formula One, as we always do.

They've always led us in the right direction," Audi team principal Jonathan Wheatley told reporters after practice at the Shanghai circuit. "Nobody's going to compromise on anything that would put teams into an uncomfortable situation." There was no immediate comment from Liberty Media-owned Formula One or the governing International Automobile Federation (FIA). The World Endurance Championship (WEC) has already postponed what would have been its season-opener in Qatar on March 26-28, with the first race now scheduled for Italy's Imola circuit on April 19. The Qatar round at the Lusail

circuit outside Doha, which also hosts Formula One in November, has been rescheduled for October 24 as the penultimate round before the finale in Bahrain on November 7. MotoGP is due to race in Qatar on April 12 with that round also likely to be cancelled.

The T20 World Cup of comebacks

**If the 2024 T20 World Cup win came as a huge relief, the 2026 victory feels relatable. From Sanju Samson, to Ishan Kishan to Rinku Singh, each player fought their own personal battles en route to create history for India.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

India have won the T20 World Cup 2026. Playing their first tournament without the demigods, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, a relatively young Indian team delivered a performance for the ages at the Narendra Modi Stadium to clinch their second straight title. Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, players who had spent years on the periphery of the Indian line-up, came together at the right moments, helping India bury the ghosts of November 19, 2023 at the Narendra Modi Stadium. This was not a straightforward title by any stretch of the

imagination. The Indian team had to grind, and grind hard, after a sudden drop in form at the start of the World Cup. The co-hosts were so poor at adjusting to the ICC



surfaces that they were reduced to 77/6 by USA and then bowled out for 111 by South Africa in the tournament. But the team found clutch performances when they needed them the most. Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, and in the final, Abhishek Sharma all put their hands up and claimed responsibility in the post Rohit-Kohli era.

ISHAN STEALS ABHISHEK'S THUNDER A small glimpse of that was seen in the post-match chat between reporters and Ishan-Abhishek in the press room in Ahmedabad. Asked about the struggles that members of

the team had to go through, Abhishek jumped on the mic, ready to blurt out the mental grind he had endured to revive his form just in time for the final. But just before he could answer, Ishan Kishan snatched the moment away from him. "I can also answer that. You were in bad form for a month, I spent two years out of the team."

Kishan's answer had Abhishek and the entire press room bursting into laughter. And it was true. Dropped from the team for dissent, and then kept out for not prioritising domestic cricket, the left-hander had to work his way back into the system the hard way. Left out, Kishan fixed his mental space in the first year of his exile. In the second, he began piling up runs in nearly every single game. The diminutive left-hander even led his state, Jharkhand, to their first-ever Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy win, the premier domestic T20 competition in the country. Kishan himself scored 517 runs in that campaign, forcing the selectors to bring him back into the Indian team.

Everyone knows that in the Indian cricketing ecosystem, the steep rise, if not handled well, can result in an equally steep fall. And Ishan knew that getting into the Indian team was only half the job done.

5 years and still smiling: Suryakumar Yadav celebrates his India debut anniversary

← **From a patient wait on the sidelines to leading India to back-to-back T20 World Cup glory, Suryakumar Yadav marks five years of a journey that redefined modern T20 batting.**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

When Suryakumar Yadav first pulled on the India jersey, little did anyone know that they were witnessing the beginning of one of the most electrifying careers in modern T20 cricket. Five years on, SKY took to social

media to express his gratitude for a journey that has been nothing short of extraordinary. It has been a journey marked by patience as much as brilliance. Suryakumar had to wait longer than most for his India call-up, spending years dominating domestic cricket and the IPL before finally getting his chance on the international stage. But when the opportunity came, he grabbed it with both hands and never looked back. From being a late bloomer to becoming the No. 1-ranked T20 batter in the world, his story resonates with every cricketer who has ever been told to wait their turn. The Indian dressing room, once a destination he could only dream of, quickly became a stage he owned.

A Record That Speaks for Itself The Mumbai batter has since become one of the most feared names in the shortest format of the game. In 113 T20 Internationals, Suryakumar has amassed 3,272 runs at an average of 36.35 and a jaw-dropping strike rate of 162.94, numbers that tell only half the



story of the chaos and brilliance he brings to the crease. Four centuries and 25 fifties punctuate his record, with his highest score of 117 coming against England in Nottingham on July 10, 2022, an innings that announced him to the world as a batter truly

in a league of his own. But Suryakumar's evolution from explosive batter to inspirational leader has perhaps been the most remarkable chapter of his India story. Leading the side in 52 T20Is, he has overseen 40 wins and just 8 losses, a record that speaks volumes about the kind of calm, aggressive intent he brings to the captaincy. From Player to Champion Captain The crowning glory, however, came on the biggest stage. As a player, he was an integral part of the side that lifted the 2024 T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies, ending India's long wait for an ICC title. And then, as captain, he went one step further, leading the Men in Blue to defend the crown earlier this month, etching his name permanently into Indian cricket folklore.

That triumph also came with a special footnote, breaking the notorious Ahmedabad jinx. This moment summed up everything SKY stands for: fearless, relentless, and always delivering when it matters most.

## Facebook's parent company just decided humans are too expensive

New Delhi, (Agency)

Meta, the company behind Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, is planning to cut a large number of jobs. Sources say the layoffs could affect around one in five employees. No official announcement has been made yet.

### Why Is This Happening?

Meta is spending heavily on artificial intelligence. Building AI tools and data centres costs a lot of money. At the same time, the company believes AI can now handle work that previously needed large teams of people. So the company is reducing its headcount to bring costs under control. Senior executives have already asked team leaders to identify which roles can be cut. The final numbers and timeline have not been decided yet. How Big Could This Be?

Meta employs tens of thousands of people worldwide. A 20 percent cut would make this one of the biggest rounds of layoffs in the company's history — larger than the 11,000 job cuts in 2022. The planning is underway but nothing has been announced publicly. Meta has not confirmed the reports. Once decisions are finalised, affected employees will be informed. Several large tech companies have been reducing staff over the past two years. Meta is doing the same — cutting people costs while investing more in AI infrastructure.

## Thousands of Indians are buying property in Dubai — But most don't know this rule exists

New Delhi, (Agency)

Dubai has become a favourite destination for Indians looking to buy property abroad — whether as an investment or a second home. But before you transfer any money, there are some important rules you need to understand. Get them wrong, and you could end up paying heavy penalties.

### How Much Money Can You Send?

The Indian government allows residents to send money abroad for buying property. But there is a strict annual limit — you can send a maximum of USD 2,50,000 per person in a financial year (April to March). This rule comes under something called the Liberalised Remittance Scheme, or LRS for short. So if a flat in Dubai costs more than USD 2,50,000, what do you do? Simple — get your spouse or other family members to co-own the property with you. Each person can send up to USD 2,50,000, so a family of four could technically pool together up to USD 10,00,000 — but only if all of them are listed as joint owners on the property's official documents. You cannot just pool money informally. One important thing to note — this scheme is only for individual people. Your company, business partnership, trust, or Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) cannot use this route to buy property abroad. How Do You Actually Send the Money?

You cannot just wire money to Dubai directly from any account. The money must go through an authorised bank in India — these are banks approved by the Reserve Bank of India to handle foreign exchange. When sending, the bank will ask you to mention the purpose of the transfer. Make sure you pick the correct purpose code for real estate purchase.

Also, the money you're sending must be clean, legitimate, and tax-paid. You cannot send black money or undisclosed income abroad.

## Govt amends public-shareholding norms to facilitate IPOs for large companies

New Delhi, (Agency)

The government has amended rules governing minimum public shareholding for large companies by introducing a tiered structure that allows large firms to offer a smaller portion of shares to the public during IPO, and do staged increases to the 25 per cent level. The amendment links minimum public offers to a company's post-issue capital at the IPO price. Companies with post-issue capital above Rs 1,600 crore but up to Rs 4,000 crore must offer shares worth at least Rs 400 crore to the public. Companies with post-issue capital above Rs 4,000 crore but up to Rs 50,000 crore will be required to offer at least 10 per cent of their shares at listing and must raise public shareholding to 25 per cent within three years, in a manner laid out by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). For companies with post-issue capital between 50,000 crore to Rs 1 lakh crore, a minimum public offer equivalent to Rs 1,000 crore in value and at least 8 per cent of each class of shares; those with capital between Rs 1 lakh crore to Rs 5 lakh crore must offer shares worth at least Rs 6,250 crore and maintain a minimum public shareholding of 2.75 per cent at listing. Companies with post-issue capital above Rs 5 lakh crore have to offer shares worth at least Rs 15,000 crore and a minimum public shareholding of 1 per cent at the time of listing, the statement noted. Under the revised framework, companies with post-issue capital of up to Rs 1,600 crore will be required to offer at least 25 per cent of each class of equity to the public similar to the current norm. The changes were notified, through the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2026 was issued by the Ministry of Finance under the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956. Irrespective of company size, firms are required to at least offer 2.5 per cent of each class of equity or convertible securities to the public, the statement said. At the time of listing, if the public shareholding is below 15 per cent, the company must raise it to at least 15 per cent within five years and further to 25 per cent within ten years of listing.

# If valuables vanish from your locker, can insurance cover the loss

New Delhi, (Agency)

Bank lockers are widely seen as the safest place to store valuables such as gold jewellery, heirlooms and important family documents. The belief is simple: once valuables are placed inside a bank locker, they are fully protected. But what many locker users do not realise is that the valuables inside those bank lockers are usually not insured at all. Banks provide the locker facility, but they generally do not insure the contents kept inside them. Valuables kept in bank lockers are not automatically insured," said Shilpa Arora, co-founder and COO of Insurance Samadhan. "Banks only provide locker space and are generally not responsible for the contents, except in cases of proven negligence." That means if jewellery or valuables go missing, customers often have to rely on separate insurance policies to recover the full value. This is the second story in

Lock & Key, a series examining how India's bank locker system works and what customers should know before trusting their valuables to a steel vault.

### THE BIG INSURANCE GAP

Many bank locker users assume that banks will compensate them if valuables disappear.

But the protection banks provide is limited. Abhishek Kumar, Sebi Registered Investment Adviser (RIA) and founder of Sahaj Money, said customers face a significant "coverage gap" if they do not insure valuables stored in lockers. Without insurance, one faces a significant coverage gap because banks are not legally responsible for the full market value of your stored items," he said. "If a loss occurs due to theft, fire or staff fraud, the bank's

payout is strictly limited to a multiple of the annual rent, which rarely covers high-value assets." Under RBI rules, a bank's liability in cases of negligence is capped at 100 times the annual locker rent.

maximum compensation you can claim is Rs 3 lakh, even if the jewellery lost is worth Rs 50 lakh or more," he said.

"As gold prices rise, this fixed cap becomes increasingly inadequate."

### CAN YOU INSURE VALUABLES KEPT IN LOCKERS?

While banks do not insure locker contents, insurance companies do offer policies that cover jewellery and other valuables. "Yes, insurers offer jewellery insurance or valuable items insurance policies," Arora said. "These can cover jewellery kept at home, worn outside, or stored in bank lockers, depending on the policy terms and declarations made at the time of purchase." Such policies are designed to protect high-value personal assets against unexpected losses.



Kumar explained how limited that protection can be. "For instance, if one pays an annual rent of Rs 3,000, the

## Either I collapse or get up and go: Anil Agarwal reflects on loss of his son

Mumbai, (Agency)

Vedanta Resources chairman Anil Agarwal has spoken candidly about the loss of his only son, saying the tragedy has strengthened his resolve to keep working for India and support the country's future generations.

Speaking at the India Today Conclave 2026, Agarwal reflected on the grief he faced after the death of his eldest son Agnivesh Agarwal, who died at the age of 49 in New York after suffering a cardiac arrest while recovering from a skiing accident. "Either I collapse, or I get up and go. I choose to get up and go because India is in our hearts and there is still so much we can do for the country," he said. The mining billionaire said the experience has made him fearless and determined to continue his work. "Now I am not scared. We will do what we have to do. We don't do small things — we work with our heart," he added. Agarwal also spoke about his belief in India's young talent and the need to create

opportunities at home rather than seeing students leave the country for education. "Every year around seven



lakh children go abroad to study. Why should that happen? People should come to India instead," he said. He emphasised that India has enormous potential if young people, women, former military personnel and professionals are given the right opportunities. "Our girls should come forward. Our ex-army officers and young professionals should get the opportunity. We have a lot of strength in this country," he said. Reflecting on his personal loss, Agarwal said it had

given him a renewed sense of purpose. "I had only one son and I lost my son. But that has given me an even stronger reason to keep working," he said.

### CALLS FOR ENERGY SELF-RELIANCE

Speaking at the India Today Conclave 2026, Anil Agarwal also urged India to reduce its dependence on imported energy. He said some global suppliers may prefer India to remain reliant on foreign oil and gas rather than becoming self-sufficient. "The countries in the Middle East and people outside don't want India to make its own oil and gas," Agarwal said. He noted that over 90% of India's oil demand is met through imports, despite the country having significant geological potential. Agarwal called for faster approvals and policy reforms to boost exploration and production, saying expanding domestic energy resources would strengthen India's economy and create new opportunities.

## ED arrests 2 in Rs 183-crore online ponzi scam; accused returned from Dubai

Mumbai, (Agency)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Sudhir Dalsukhbhai Kotadiya and Umang Santibhai Kotadiya in connection with a Rs 183-crore digital Ponzi scheme linked to QFON App Limited and related entities. The arrests were made on March 11 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002. The accused were produced before a special court in Mumbai, which remanded them to ED custody for eight days, till March 20, for further investigation. The case stems from a police complaint registered in December 2024 in Maharashtra's Thane. The FIR accused Sudhir Kotadiya, Umang Kotadiya, Jaysukh Sakhariya and others of running a fraudulent digital investment scheme that allegedly collected large sums from investors in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The complaint invoked several provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Maharashtra Protection of Interest of Depositors Act, 1999. According to ED investigators, the accused lured people into investing money through a mobile-based platform operated by QFON App Limited. Investors were promised unusually high returns ranging between two percent and 10.5 percent. The scheme claimed that the returns would come from activities such as viewing online advertisements and other digital tasks through the app. However, the investigation found that the business model had no real revenue stream. Instead, money collected from new investors was used to pay returns to earlier investors, a common feature of Ponzi schemes. Authorities also suspect that a significant portion of the funds was siphoned off. The financial probe agency by the accused.

cy said the funds were routed through multiple bank accounts belonging to companies, firms and individuals linked to the accused.

Some money was also allegedly transferred through informal cash channels using Angadiya operators. So far, investigators estimate that proceeds of crime worth around Rs 183 crore were generated through the scheme.

Officials further said the two accused had been absconding during both the police investigation and the ED probe. Investigators later discovered that they had fled to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and subsequently re-entered India through Nepal. After sustained tracking and intelligence inputs, ED officials were able to locate and arrest the two men on March 11.

Earlier search operations conducted by the agency at several locations led to the recovery of documents, digital devices and financial records. Investigators also seized cash worth Rs 2.51 crore during the searches.

## India's services exports reach 10% of GDP, trade deals offer new opportunities

New Delhi, (Agency)

India's services exports have maintained strong momentum in FY2025-26, supported by sustained global demand for Indian services and over the April-January 2025-26 period, services exports are estimated at USD 348.4 billion, an official factsheet said on Saturday.

India's services exports share in GDP averaged 9.7 per cent during FY23-FY25, marking a notable rise from 7.4 per cent in the pre-pandemic period, and highlighting the growing role of the services sector in supporting economic growth. "This stabilising contribution strengthened further in the first half (H1) of FY26, with the share of services exports in GDP increasing to 10 per cent, highlighting the continued expansion and resilience of India's services-led growth

trajectory," the factsheet revealed. The services sector has also emerged as a major source of employment generation. It accounts for nearly 30 per cent of total employment. Over the past six years, the sector added nearly 40 million jobs, in the post-COVID recovery period, highlighting its role as an important labour market shock absorber. India's services exports have recorded strong and consistent growth in recent years, emerging as one of the most resilient drivers of the country's external sector performance. Moreover, rising foreign investment in India's services sector support the rapid expansion of Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and deepening international trade partnerships, which have helped in strengthening India's position as a preferred destination for globally delivered services.

Services-sector FDI inflows accounted for an average 80.2 per cent of total FDI during FY23-FY25, up from 77.7 per cent in the pre-pandemic period, reflecting growing investor confidence in India's services export ecosystem. Investment has remained concentrated in information and communication services (25.8 per cent) and professional services (23.8 per cent), reflecting India's strength in digital and knowledge-intensive activities. Notably, India's expanding network of trade agreements has played an important role in strengthening market access for its services sector across global markets. These agreements provide greater mobility for professionals, and new opportunities for Indian service providers across a wide range of services.

## Indian benchmark indices dip nearly 6% this week over Middle East tensions

**Nifty dipped 5.31 per cent during the week and lost 2.06 per cent on the last trading day to reach 23,151. At close, Sensex was down 1,470 points or 1.93 per cent at 74,563. It advanced 5.52 per cent during the week.**

New Delhi, (Agency)

Indian equity benchmarks lost nearly 6 per cent on a weekly basis, reflecting sustained selling pressure amid escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia. Nifty dipped 5.31 per cent during the week and lost 2.06 per cent on the last trading day to reach 23,151. At close, Sensex was down 1,470 points or 1.93 per cent at 74,563. It advanced 5.52 per cent during the week. The sharp correction has largely been driven by the surge in crude oil prices and rising macroeconomic concerns for energy-importing economies like India. The Nifty Auto index plunged around 10-11 per cent, marking its worst weekly performance since March 2020,



with each stock in the index seeing a strong sell off. Shortages of LNG and LPG raise the risk of production disruptions, while potential constraints in CNG availability could alter consumer demand patterns, especially in urban markets where CNG

vehicles have gained traction. Sector-wise, banking, metal, and auto stocks were among the biggest drags on the last trading day of the week. The sharp decline wiped out nearly Rs 9.5 lakh crore in investor wealth in a single session. Broader indices performed in line

with the benchmark indices during the week, as the Nifty Midcap100 declined 4.59 per cent, while Nifty Smallcap100 dipped 3.66 per cent. Higher crude prices not only elevate inflation risks but also contribute to currency weakness, with the Indian rupee coming under pressure, further dampening investor sentiment, analysts said. The Indian rupee weakened for the second consecutive week, settling at a fresh record low of 92.45 against the US dollar. Analysts said that immediate support for Nifty is seen at 23,000 and immediate resistance is placed at 23,300 and 23,500 levels.

For Bank Nifty, 53,500 stands as the immediate support level, followed by 53,000, market participants said. On the upside, 54,000 acts as the immediate resistance, followed by 54,300 levels. India VIX climbed above the 22 level, signalling heightened fear among market participants and expectations of wider price swings in the near term, analysts said.

# Avneet Kaur

## Drops Jaw-Dropping Photos in a Sexy Backless Look

Avneet Kaur has once again proven why she is considered one of the most stylish young fashion icons in the Indian entertainment space. Known for experimenting with bold silhouettes and glamorous aesthetics, the actor continues to command attention with her fashion-forward choices. In her latest photos, Avneet embraces a dramatic, sultry style, posing in a striking black outfit that highlights her confidence and flair for high-fashion photography.

The outfit itself is a statement piece. Avneet is seen wearing a sleek, black backless dress that dramatically exposes her back while hugging her silhouette in a fluid, sculpted manner. The design features a deep open-back cut that curves elegantly along the sides of her torso, creating a bold yet refined look. The minimalist nature of the garment places emphasis on the clean lines of the dress and the striking cut-out detailing. The fabric appears smooth and structured, draping closely along her frame while maintaining a polished finish that enhances the overall sophistication of the look.

One of the most noticeable elements of the outfit is how it frames her back. The dress is cut extremely low, revealing the natural contour of her back and highlighting a delicate tattoo that runs along the upper spine. The tattoo becomes an artistic focal point in the shoot, adding a layer of personal expression to the otherwise minimalist styling. The sleek black tone of the dress contrasts beautifully against her skin, making the silhouette appear even more striking under the soft lighting.

Her styling remains intentionally minimal to let the dress take centre stage. Avneet keeps accessories almost non-existent, opting for a clean, uncluttered look that aligns with the editorial mood of the shoot.

Her hair is styled in long, voluminous waves that cascade naturally over her shoulders. The glossy texture and soft layers add movement and dimension to the photos, complementing the elegance of the outfit. In some frames, she gently runs her hand through her hair, enhancing the relaxed yet seductive mood of the shoot.

Avneet's makeup follows a classic soft-glam approach that elevates the overall look without overpowering it. Her skin appears luminous and smooth, with a radiant base that catches the light beautifully. Subtle contouring defines her cheekbones, while a warm-toned blush gives her complexion a natural glow.



## Was Sai Pallavi Considered For Madhubala's Biopic? Here's What We Know



A biopic on the legendary actress Madhubala is in the making, and there are several reports about the project that are doing the rounds on social media. It is one of the most awaited films, and even the fans are excited to see who will feature in the biopic. For the longest time, Kiara Advani's name was associated with the project. However, the reports of her doing the biopic were rubbished recently. Now, a new report suggests that Sai Pallavi, who is set to make her debut with Ek Din, was one of the choices to play Madhubala.

### Sai Pallavi was one of the choices for the Madhubala biopic

According to Filmfare, Sai Pallavi, who is looking forward to her Bollywood debut, was in the running to bag the iconic role of Madhubala in her upcoming biopic, alongside Kiara. Reportedly, Sai Pallavi was one of producer Sanjay Leela Bhansali's choices for the movie. A source told the portal Bhansali wanted a fresh face as Madhubala, and Sai Pallavi fit the bill, owing to her very limited appearance in Bollywood.

However, the talks ultimately did not materialise in Sai Pallavi joining the cast. While the source did not reveal the exact reason behind this, it is believed that scheduling conflicts with her previously committed projects, including Ramayana, may have played a role.

Recently, even Saiyaara fame Aneet Padda's name made headlines. But YRF's team denied the developments. Meanwhile, Sai Pallavi's first film in Hindi will be Ek Din opposite Aamir Khan's son Junaid Khan. The film will hit theatres on May 1. Apart from this, Sai already has Ramayana Part 1 and 2 with Ranbir Kapoor, Sunny Deol, and Yash. She will be seen playing the role of Sita, while Ranbir, Sunny, and Yash will be seen as Lord Rama, Hanuman, and Ravana, respectively. Part 1 of the Nitesh Tiwari directorial will hit theatres on Diwali 2026, while the second part is planned for 2027. Currently, the shooting for Ramayana Part 2 is ongoing.

## Daddy Cool! Sidharth Malhotra's Casual Look Is Just Too Good



Sidharth Malhotra was recently spotted in Mumbai as he resumed work commitments following a brief break to enjoy time as a new father. The star's appearance during a shooting schedule quickly caught the attention of fans and paparazzi. As he stepped out of his car, Sidharth greeted photographers with a warm smile and happily posed for pictures. His return to the public eye created a buzz among fans who were excited to see the actor back on set.

### Sidharth Malhotra Keeps It Cool in Mumbai Heat

For the outing, Sidharth kept his look simple yet stylish. He wore a grey T-shirt paired with faded blue jeans, giving off a relaxed and effortless vibe.

The actor completed the look with sleek black sunglasses, adding a touch of charm while braving the Mumbai heat.

### Sidharth Malhotra Mourns Father Sunil Malhotra

While Sidharth has returned to work, the actor recently went through a difficult personal phase following the passing of his father, Sunil Malhotra.

To remember him, the actor shared a series of heartfelt throwback photographs on social media along with an emotional note. During this time, Sidharth and his wife, Kiara Advani, travelled to New Delhi to be with the family and support them through the loss.

### From Param Sundari to Upcoming Action-Thriller Vvan: Force of the Forest

On the work front, Sidharth Malhotra was last seen in Param Sundari alongside Janhvi Kapoor. The film marked one of the actor's major releases in 2025. He is now preparing for his upcoming action-thriller Vvan: Force of the Forest, which has already generated significant buzz among fans. The film pairs Sidharth with Tamannaah Bhatia and promises an intense story set in mysterious forest landscapes.

### Inside the World of Vvan: Force of the Forest

Set in the dense and mythical forests of Central India, the film draws inspiration from Indian folklore and legends. To enhance realism, the makers are filming in actual forest locations, adding authenticity to the narrative.



# Bhumi Pednekar

## Shares Details About Her Film With Imran Khan: 'I Can't Wait For People To See It'

Actress Bhumi Pednekar recently opened up about her career break, spiritual journey, and upcoming projects during an appearance on The Right Angle with Sonal Kalra. The actor revealed that she took a nine-month hiatus from acting following the release of her web series The Royals last year, choosing to focus on mental health and personal growth after the show faced backlash. Bhumi returned to screens earlier this year with her film Daldal, which has reportedly received a positive response. During the interview, she reflected on the journey behind the show's reception and what lies ahead in her career.

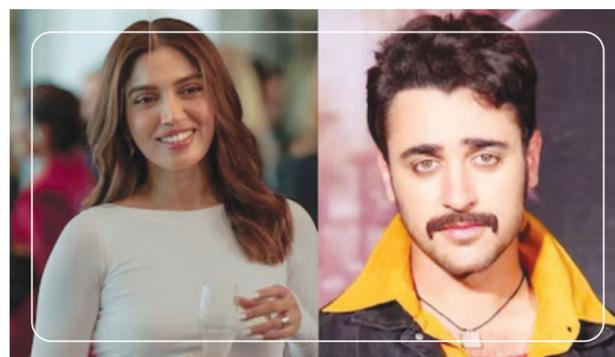
### Bhumi Pednekar On Finding Spiritual Balance

When asked by journalist Sonal Kalra about her future plans after the success of Daldal, Bhumi shared how spirituality helped her find stability during a challenging phase.

"I'm very, very thrilled. Jaisa response Daldal ko mila. Main aapko sach bataun... woh Thursday ko aata hai, OTT shows ke saath woh Friday wala concept nahi hota hai. Wednesday raat ko when the show dropped, main Golden Temple gayi thi, wahan 5-6 ghante maine sewa kari, because that is my way of disconnecting. You know,

I found like this beautiful spiritual connection with God, and it has changed my life. And I think one thing I would also want to tell all the youngsters, I wish I had found this when I was younger, you know, especially millennials. Humara naa aisa disconnect ho gaya hai with whatever superior energy that exists, and there is an energy that exists, especially in India. We are so lucky. Humare naa DNA me hi hai. And I wish I had found it earlier. Shayad mujhe woh break lene ki zarurat nahi padhti. Because

spirituality, your faith, whatever faith you believe in, whatever energy you believe in, woh aapko bohot stable rakhta hai, itna energised rakhta hai aapko. So my biggest advice that I can actually give younger people is that find your connection with God, with the universe. With whatever it is. Bohot important hai. But, main sewa karne gayi thi hai and Thursday maine kisi se baat nahi ki. Maine socha chalo fine.



Friday onwards I started getting messages, responses. Saturday tak Daldal was trending globally and maine naa yeh aspiration rakha hi nahi tha show ke liye. Maine kaha haan yaar Indian show hai, dekhenge log. When I started seeing, number one UK, Singapore, Switzerland, Indonesia, America, kuchh ho raha hai. And I think, it happened because I was just so open to receive everything."

### Bhumi Pednekar On Imran Khan's Comeback Film

During the conversation, Bhumi also confirmed that she has already completed shooting for a romantic film that marks the comeback of actor Imran Khan.



# Bad beauty habits to fix now



Pause and take a look at your daily beauty ritual. Time to bring it back on track if the don'ts overpower the dos

It's natural to pick a bad habit or two even when it comes to beauty. But not many of us are aware of these. Says Narcis Jordan, a beauty professional, "Poor hygiene could lead to severe skin and hair infections. Following a beauty routine according to your skin and hair type is not enough, you need to make sure that you are doing it the proper and healthy way." There's more...

#### Sleeping with make-up on

Beauty experts have often spoken about the harmful effects of sleeping with make-up on. Nevertheless, many still forget to cleanse their face before going off to bed. No matter how tired you are, make sure to remove each and every trace of make-up before you retire for the night. It can clog your pores and can cause acne breakouts. It can also make your skin look dull due to the product buildup.



**Beauty advice:** Make-up professional Meghna Butani says, "Use a make-up remover to clean your face thoroughly, before washing it off with water and cleanser. You can use unscented baby wipes to remove your eye make-up. Make sure to apply night cream after that."

#### Touching your face too often

A common mistake that most women make, consciously or unconsciously, is to keep

touching their face throughout the day. Touching your face consistently can lead to a buildup of dirt and oil from your fingertips to your face; this will clog your pores and cause breakouts.

**Beauty advice:** "Sanitise your hands if you've been outdoors or to the washroom before you touch your face. Further, you need to make a conscious effort to remember

that touching your face too often can lead to a buildup of dirt on your face," adds Jordan.

#### Throw away old make-up

Make-up expires with time. Once opened, make-up products become susceptible to contamination and can also collect bacteria. Using old make-up items can cause blemishes and also lead to skin irritations.

**Beauty advice:** Always remember to throw away eye and face make-up products like mascara, kajal, foundation and compact which have been used for more than six months.

#### Overdoing the tweeze

Dermatologist Dr Aparna Santhanam says, "You might not have enough time to visit the salon, but plucking away uneven or extra hair with tweezers could be harmful for your facial skin. Do you know that too much tweezing of your eyebrows can completely change the look of your face? For example, if you have thin eyebrows and keep plucking it, it can make your face look larger

and older than you actually are."

**Beauty advice:** If you feel that you have unwanted hair around your eyebrows, stick to just plucking one or two. Further use a thin comb to shape your eyebrows and use a little bit of gel to shape them properly.

#### Clear off dirty make-up brushes

More often than not, one forgets to clean the make-up brushes on a daily basis. Think about all the surfaces your make-up brush comes in contact with — bathroom countertops, inside of your make-up bag etc. They breed bacteria, if you do not clean them properly. They will irritate your skin and also cause itching and burning eyes. Apart from this, using dirty brushes may also impact the look of your make-up. The application of your foundation or compact will not be smooth as it's supposed to be.

**Beauty advice:** Clean your brush at least once a week. Wash them with water and shampoo and lay them flat to dry out in the sun. However, you must never blow-dry these brushes, else they might stay damp.

## Skincare for working Women



The facial skin is the most sensitive and deserves the highest attention. These days due to exposure to pollution, climatic changes and stress the skin loses its sheen very easily. Investing in a planned beauty treatment that works deep from within can be very helpful in such cases. Opting for therapies using organic products like argan oil, goji berry extract, avocado oil, gold elements etc over a couple of months show a lot of positive results.

The beauty of using organic products is that they blend with the body's natural system, supporting the skin in its regeneration process.

Organic facial helps in fighting dead skin cell and reveal the new skin underneath, leaving the skin visibly lighter. Thus, washing your face with homemade ingredients is the best way to care for your skin.

Argan Oil is another ingredient used extensively for the skin, hair and body. Extracted from the magical Argan tree, it is the best secret weapon for red-carpet like radiance. It's deep conditioning properties works wonder on the entire skin. A lot of celebrities vouch by Argan oil for their perfect and blemish-free skin. After all, there is nothing more beautiful than having a naturally glowing skin for a woman.

# Spa therapies

you must try before your wedding day



massage followed by a scrub and a facial that enhances one's glow. Brides-to-be also love the Mediterranean sojourn — a luxe scrub with marine salt, brown sugar and lemon that softens the skin and the Egyptian one, where you relax in a milk bath with brown algae extracts and gold flecks, that lends the body a silky smoothness." And to bust fatigue, opt for a de-stress massage. Says Nalini Naegamvala, "This is a scalp, neck, shoulder, hand and foot massage that eases away aches. It's a lunchtime regimen that can be done without taking off the clothes or having a shower."

Skin pampering soaks for the bride and couple-to-be are also big on the agenda. Informs Dastur, "In demand are 'royal baths' that use rose bath salts, crystals with rose oil and coloured flower petals and Moroccan lamps — all of which go to enhance the whole experience. So it's really a colour therapy experience, which is very popular, now." Traditional herbal baths are also a great option. They offer a tranquil and beautifying experience. "You can use herbs such as triphala churna or mulgari churna which are added to water or milk and poured over the person. Not only does it help with skin disorders but it is also

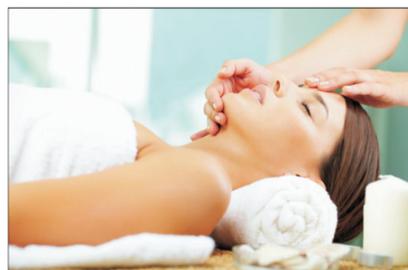
cooling and refreshing," says Nitin Rajen, ayurvedic spa co-ordinator.

One of the biggest skin woes is tanning and roughness on the skin of the feet. Spa foot therapies are now as exotic as it gets. You can choose from a variety of foot treatments — with roses, chocolate, peppermint oils, Mandarin oranges, lime and honey.

It's not just for the bride alone. The trend is to round up the gals and head to the spa. The therapies have now translated into girl getaways to places like Goa and Maldives before the big day. "Each spa has a curated menu designed to ensure that the bride and her friends feel rejuvenated. Popular now, are massages using heated coconut sticks and organic scrubs made from pineapple and papaya, followed by lunch, yoga and meditation," says Lyle Lewis, general manager at such a facility.

#### Check into a salt room

One of the latest wellness trends, this uses one of nature's most basic ingredients — salt, which is anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory. Say hello to the 'salt therapy'. Opened at Horniman Circle in Mumbai, you check into the salt room here and breathe in the grain. This helps combat respiratory ailments and leaves you feeling calm and refreshed. Salt also acts as a cleanser on the skin and gives it a glow.



Heading towards your big, D-Day soon? The run-up to it is bound to be full of stress, to-do lists, shopping trips and more. And in all that, it's important to find the time to recharge, lose the fatigue and get prepared for your wedding day. To help you unwind, it's a good idea to chalk up trips to the spa for a mix of massages for your pressure points, body wraps, facials and other relaxation therapies. Here's more...

#### Skincare facials

Signature facials are definitely a part of the list. "Brides love the 'blue diamond' facial, with mineral ingredients and thermal spring water, which gives a brightening and even tone skin effect," says Husnavaz Dastur, spa director at a hotel at Lower Parel. And grooms get pampered, too. "Popular for men are facials that use

minerals to remove dead skin cells and clarifying masks. You also have eye treatments that are part of the facial," she says.

One of the best ways to de-stress is via an Ayurvedic massage, which effectively drains away toxins and restores the energy balance in the body. The masseur uses vigorous strokes (not painful) in order to balance the energy centers. There's a lot to try — Abhyanga, a hot-oil massage, Shirodhara, where herb-infused hot oil is dripped onto the forehead or Tanlepa, an oil massage followed by a wrap. There's also an international blend to help you relax and get shipshape. Says Gunjan Chawla, spa director at a five-star hotel at Juhu, "We do an odyssey, a total indulgence trip, which is an hour-long